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THE WORKS OF THOMAS HARDY IN PROSE AND VERSE

WITH PREFACES AND NOTES

VERSE

VOL. III

Wynyards Gap (in "A Trampwoman's Tragedy")

THE DYNASTS

AN EPIC-DRAMA

OF THE WAR WITH NAPOLEON, IN THREE PARTS, NINETEEN ACTS, AND ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY SCENES

PART THIRD

TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS

AND OTHER VERSES

BY

THOMAS HARDY

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1913

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PART THIRD

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THE DYNASTS

AN EPIC-DRAMA OF THE WAR WITH NAPOLEON, IN THREE PARTS, NINETEEN ACTS, AND ONE HUNDRED & THIRTY SCENES

THE TIME COVERED BY THE ACTION BEING ABOUT TEN YEARS

PART THIRD

And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and wrong,
And trumpets blown for wars.

PART THIRD

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MEN

The Prince Regent.
The Royal Dukes.
The Duke of Richmond.
The Duke of Beaufort.
Liverpool, Prime Minister.
Castlereagh, Foreign Secretary.
Vansittart, Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Palmerston, War Secretary.
Ponsonby.
Burdett, Whitbread, *Tierney, Romilly,* } Of the Opposition.
Other Members of Parliament.
Two Attachés.
A Diplomatist.
Ambassadors, Ministers, Peers, and other persons of Quality and Office.

Wellington.
Uxbridge.

Picton.
Hill.
Clinton.
Colville.
Cole.
Beresford.
Pack and Kempt.
Byng.
Vivian.
W. Ponsonby, Vandeleur, Colquhoun Grant, Maitland, Adam, and C. Halkett.
Graham, Le Marchant, Pakenham, and Sir Stapleton Cotton.
Sir W. de Lancey.
Fitzroy Somerset.
Colonels Fraser, H. Halkett, Colborne, *Cameron, Hepburn,* Lord Saltoun, *C. Campbell.*
Sir Neil Campbell.
Sir Alexander Gordon, Bridgeman, Tyler, *and other* Aides.

CAPTAIN MERCER.
Other Generals, Colonels, and Military Officers.
Couriers.

A SERGEANT OF DRAGOONS.
Another SERGEANT.
A SERGEANT of the 15th Hussars.
A SENTINEL. *Bâtmen.*
AN OFFICER'S SERVANT.
Other non-Commissioned Officers and Privates of the British Army.
English Forces.

SIR W. GELL, Chamberlain to the Princess of Wales.
MR. LEGH, a Wessex Gentleman.
Another GENTLEMAN.
THE VICAR OF DURNOVER.
Signor Tramezzini and other Members of the Opera Company.
M. Rozier, a dancer.

LONDON CITIZENS.
A RUSTIC and a YEOMAN.
A MAIL-GUARD.
TOWNSPEOPLE, *Musicians, Villagers, etc.*

THE DUKE OF BRUNSWICK.
THE PRINCE OF ORANGE.
Count Alten.
Von Ompteda, Baring, Duplat, and other Officers of the King's-German Legion.
Perponcher, Best, Kielmansegge, Wincke, and other Hanoverian Officers.
Bylandt and other Officers of the Dutch-Belgian troops.
SOME HUSSARS.
King's-German, Hanoverian, Brunswick, and Dutch-Belgian Forces.

BARON VAN CAPELLEN, Belgian Secretary of State.
The Dukes of Arenberg and d'Ursel.
THE MAYOR OF BRUSSELS.
CITIZENS AND IDLERS of Brussels.

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JOSEPH BONAPARTE.
Jérôme Bonaparte.
THE KING OF ROME.
Eugène de Beauharnais.
Cambacérès, Arch-Chancellor to Napoléon.
TALLEYRAND.
CAULAINCOURT.
DE BAUSSET.

MURAT, King of Naples.
SOULT, Napoléon's Chief of Staff.
NEY.
DAVOUT.
MARMONT.
BERTHIER.
BERTRAND.
BESSIÈRES.
AUGEREAU, MACDONALD, LAURISTON, CAMBRONNE.
Oudinot, Friant, Reille, d'Erlon, Drouot, Victor, Poniatowski, Jourdan, and other Marshals, and General and Regimental Officers of Napoléon's Army.
RAPP, MORTIER, LARIBOISIÈRE.
Kellermann and Milhaud.
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DE CANISY, Equerry to the King of Rome.
COMMANDANT LESSARD.
Another COMMANDANT.
BUSSY, an Orderly Officer.
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STRAGGLERS; A MAD SOLDIER.
French Forces.

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DE MONTROND, an emissary of Napoléon's.
Other Secretaries to Napoléon.
CONSTANT, Napoléon's Valet.
ROUSTAN, Napoléon's Mameluke.
TWO POSTILLIONS.
A TRAVELLER.
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SERVANTS at the Tuileries.
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MÜFFLING, Wellington's Prussian Attaché.
GNEISENAU.
Zieten.
Bülow.
Kleist, Steinmetz, Thielemann, Falkenhausen.
Other Prussian General and Regimental Officers.
A Prussian PRISONER of the French.
Prussian Forces.

FRANCIS, Emperor of Austria.
METTERNICH, Chancellor and Foreign Minister.
Hardenberg.
NEIPPERG.
Schwarzenberg, Field-Marshal.
Meerfeldt, Klenau, Hesse-Homburg, and other Austrian Generals.
Viennese Personages of rank and fashion.
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Nesselrode.
KUTÚZOF.
Bennigsen.
Barclay de Tolly, Dokhtórof, Bagration, Platoff, Tchichagoff, Miloradovitch, and other Russian Generals.
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The Duchess of York.
THE DUCHESS OF RICHMOND.
The Duchess of Beaufort.
LADY H. DALRYMPLE.
Lady de Lancey.
LADY CHARLOTTE CAMPBELL.
Lady Anne Hamilton.
A YOUNG LADY AND HER MOTHER.
MRS. DALBIAC, a Colonel's wife.
MRS. PRESCOTT, a Captain's wife.
Other English Ladies of note and rank.
Madame Grassini and other Ladies of the Opera.
Madame Angiolini, a dancer.
VILLAGE WOMEN.
SOLDIERS' WIVES AND SWEETHEARTS.
A SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER.

THE EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE.
The Empress of Austria.
MARIA CAROLINA of Naples.
Queen Hortense.
Lætitia, Madame Bonaparte.
The Princess Pauline.
THE DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO.
THE COUNTESS OF MONTESQUIOU.
THE COUNTESS OF BRIGNOLE.
Other Ladies-in-Waiting on Marie Louise.

THE EX-EMPRESS JOSÉPHINE.
LADIES-IN-WAITING on Joséphine.
Another FRENCH LADY.
FRENCH MARKET-WOMEN.
A SPANISH LADY.
French and Spanish Women of pleasure.
Continental Citizens' Wives.
Camp-followers.

ACT FIRST

SCENE I

THE BANKS OF THE NIEMEN, NEAR KOWNO

The foreground is a hillock on a broken upland, seen in summer evening twilight. On the left, further back, are the dusky forests of Wilkowsky; on the right is the vague shine of a large river.

Emerging from the wood below the eminence appears a shadowy amorphous thing in motion, the central or Imperial column of NAPOLÉON'S Grand Army for the invasion of Russia, comprising the corps of OUDINOT, NEY, and DAVOUT, with the Imperial Guard. This, with the right and left columns, makes up the host of nearly half a million, all starting on their march to Moscow. The EMPEROR is pausing on the hillock. The air is warm.

While the rearmost regiments are arriving, NAPOLÉON rides ahead with GENERAL HAXEL and one or two others to reconnoitre the river. NAPOLÉON'S horse stumbles and throws him. He picks himself up before he can be helped.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS (to Napoléon)

The portent is an ill one, Emperor;
An ancient Roman would retire thereat!

NAPOLÉON

Whose voice was that, jarring upon my thought
So insolently?

HAXEL AND OTHERS

Sire, we spoke no word.

NAPOLÉON

Then, whoso spake, such portents I defy!

[He remounts.

When the reconnoitrers again come back to the foreground of the scene the huge array of columns is standing quite still, in circles of companies, the captain of each in the middle with a paper in his hand. He reads from it a proclamation. They quiver emotionally, like leaves stirred by a wind. NAPOLÉON and his staff reascend the hillock, and his own words as repeated to the ranks reach his ears, while he himself delivers the same address to those about him.

NAPOLÉON

Soldiers, wild war is on the board again;
The lifetime-long alliance Russia swore
At Tilsit, for the English realm's undoing,
Is violate beyond refurbishment,
And she intractable and unashamed.
Russia is forced on by fatality:
She cries, her destiny must be outwrought,
Meaning at our expense. Does she then dream
We are no more the men of Austerlitz,
With nothing left of our old featfulness?
She offers us the choice of sword or shame;
We have made that choice unhesitatingly!
Then let us forthwith stride the Niemen flood,
Let us bear war into her great gaunt land,
And spread our glory there as otherwhere,
So that a stable peace shall stultify
The evil seed-bearing that Russian wiles
Have nourished upon Europe's choked affairs
These fifty years!

The midsummer night darkens. They all make their bivouacs and sleep.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Something is tongued afar.

PART THIRD

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

The Russian counter-proclamation rolls,
But we alone have gift to catch it here.

DISTANT VOICE IN THE WIND

The hostile hatchings of Napoléon's brain
Against our Empire, long have harassed us
And mangled all our mild amenities.
So, since the hunger for embranglement
That gnaws this man, has left us optionless,
And haled us recklessly to horrid war,
We have promptly mustered our well-hardened hosts,
And, counting on our call to the Most High,
Have forthwith set our puissance face to face
Against Napoléon's.—Ranksmen! officers!
You fend your lives, your land, your liberty.
I am with you. Heaven frowns on the aggressor.

SPIRIT IRONIC

Ha! "Liberty" is quaint, and pleases me,
Sounding from such a soil!

Midsummer-day breaks, and the sun rises on the right, revealing the position clearly. The eminence overlooks for miles the river Niemen, now mirroring the morning rays. Across the river three temporary bridges have been thrown, and towards them the French masses streaming out of the forest descend in three columns.

They sing, shout, fling their shakos in the air and repeat words from the proclamation, their steel and brass flashing in the sun. They narrow their columns as they gain the three bridges, and begin to cross—horse, foot, and artillery.

NAPOLÉON has come from the tent in which he has passed the night to the high ground in front, where he stands, the sun yellowing his face, watching through his glass the committal of his army to the enterprise. DAVOUT, NEY, MURAT, OUDINOT, Generals HAXEL and EBLÉ, NARBONNE, and others surround him.

It turns to a day of drowsing heat, and the Emperor draws a deep breath as he shifts his weight from one puffed calf to the other. The light cavalry, the foot, the artillery having passed, the heavy horse now crosses, their glitter outshining the ripples on the stream.

A messenger enters. NAPOLÉON reads papers that are brought, and frowns.

NAPOLÉON

The English heads decline to recognize
The government of Joseph, King of Spain,
As that of "the now-ruling dynasty";
But only Ferdinand's!—I'll get to Moscow,
And send thence my rejoinder. France shall wage
Another fifty years of wasting war
Before a Bourbon shall remount the throne
Of restless Spain! . . . .

(A flash lights his eyes.)

But this long journey now just set a-trip
Is my choice way to India; and 'tis there
That I shall next bombard the British rule.
With Moscow taken, Russia prone and crushed,
To attain the Ganges is simplicity—
Auxiliaries from Tiflis backing me.
Once ripped by a French sword, the scaffolding
Of English merchant-mastership in Ind
Will fall a wreck. . . . Vast, it is true, must bulk
An Eastern scheme so planned; but I could work it. . . .
Man has, worse fortune, but scant years for war;
I am good for another five!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Why doth he go?—
I see returning in a chattering flock
Bleached skeletons, instead of this array
Invincibly equipped.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

I'll show you why.

The unnatural light before seen usurps that of the sun, bringing into view, like breezes made visible, the films or brain-tissues of the Immanent Will, that pervade all things, ramifying through the whole army, NAPOLÉON included, and moving them to Its inexplicable artistries.

NAPOLÉON (with sudden despondency)

That which has worked will work! — Since Lodi Bridge
The force I then felt move me moves me on
Whether I will or no; and oftentimes
Against my better mind. . . . Why am I here?
—By laws imposed on me inexorably!
History makes use of me to weave her web
To her long while aforetime-figured mesh
And contemplated charactery: no more.
Well, war's my trade; and whencesoever springs
This one in hand, they'll label it with my name!

The natural light returns and the anatomy of the Will disappears. NAPOLÉON mounts his horse and descends in the rear of his host to the banks of the Niemen. His face puts on a saturnine humour, and he hums an air.

Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine;
Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre,
Ne sait quand reviendra!

[Exeunt NAPOLÉON and staff.

SPIRIT SINISTER

It is kind of his Imperial Majesty to give me a lead.
(Sings.)

Monsieur d'Malbrough est mort,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine;
Monsieur d'Malbrough est mort,
Est mort et enterré!

Anon the figure of NAPOLÉON, diminished to the aspect of a doll, reappears in front of his suite on the plain below. He rides across the swaying bridge. Since the morning the sky has grown overcast, and its blackness seems now to envelope the retreating array on the other side of stream. The storm bursts, with thunder and lightning, the river turns leaden, and the scene is blotted out by the torrents of rain.

SCENE II

THE FORD OF SANTA MARTA, SALAMANCA

We are in Spain, on a July night of the same summer, the air being hot and heavy. In the darkness the ripple of the river Tormes can be heard over the ford, which is near the foreground of the scene on the right.

Against the gloomy north sky to the left, lightnings flash, revealing rugged heights in that quarter. From the heights comes to the ear the tramp of soldiery, broken and irregular, as by obstacles in their descent; as yet they are some distance off. On heights to the right hand, on the other side of the river, glimmer the bivouac fires of the French under MARMONT. The lightning quickens, with rolls of thunder, and a few large drops of rain fall.

A sentinel stands close to the ford, and beyond him is the ford-house, a shed open towards the roadway and the spectator. It is lit by a single lantern, and occupied by some half-dozen English dragoons with a sergeant and corporal, who form part of a mounted patrol, their horses being picketed at the entrance. They are seated on a bench, and appear to be waiting with some deep intent, speaking in murmurs only.

The thunderstorm increases till it drowns the noise of the ford and of the descending battalions, making them seem further off than before. The sentinel is about to retreat to the shed when he discerns two female figures in the gloom.

Enter MRS. DALBIAC and MRS. PRESCOTT, English officers' wives.

SENTINEL

Where there's war there's women, and where there's women there's trouble! (Aloud) Who goes there?

MRS. DALBIAC

We must reveal who we are, I fear (to her companion). Friends! (to sentinel).

SENTINEL

Advance and give the countersign.

MRS. DALBIAC

Oh, but we can't!

SENTINEL

Consequent which, you must retreat. By Lord Wellington's strict regulations, women of loose character are to be excluded from the lines for moral reasons, namely, that they are often employed by the enemy as spies.

MRS. PRESCOTT

Dear good soldier, we are English ladies benighted, having mistaken our way back to Salamanca, and we want shelter from the storm.

MRS. DALBIAC

If it is necessary I will say who we are.—I am Mrs. Dalbiac, wife of the Lieutenant-Colonel of the Fourth Light Dragoons, and this lady is the wife of Captain Prescott of the Seventh Fusileers. We went out to Christoval to look for our husbands, but found the army had moved.

SENTINEL (incredulously)

"Wives!" Oh, not to-day! I have heard such titles of courtesy afore; but they never shake me. "W" begins other female words than "wives!"—You'll have trouble, good dames, to get into Salamanca to-night. You'll be challenged all the way down, and shot without clergy if you can't give the countersign.

MRS. PRESCOTT

Then surely you'll tell us what it is, good kind man!

SENTINEL

Well—have ye earned enough to pay for knowing? Government wage is poor pickings for watching here in the rain. How much can ye stand?

MRS. DALBIAC

Half-a-dozen pesetas.

SENTINEL

Very well, my dear. I was always tender-hearted. Come along. (They advance and hand the money.) The pass to-night is "Melchester Steeple." That will take you into the town when the weather clears. You won't have to cross the ford. You can get temporary shelter in the shed there.

As the ladies move towards the shed the tramp of the infantry draws near the ford, which the downfall has made to purl more boisterously. The twain enter the shed, and the dragoons look up inquiringly.

MRS. DALBIAC (to dragoons)

The French are luckier than you are, men. You'll have a wet advance across this ford, but they have a dry retreat by the bridge at Alba.

SERGEANT OF PATROL (starting from a doze)

The moustachies a dry retreat? Not they, my dear. A Spanish garrison is in the castle that commands the bridge at Alba.

MRS. DALBIAC

A peasant told us, if we understood rightly, that he saw the Spanish withdraw, and the enemy place a garrison there themselves.

The sergeant hastily calls up two troopers, who mount and ride off with the intelligence.

SERGEANT

You've done us a good turn, if it is true, darlin'. Not that Lord Wellington will believe it when he gets the news. . . . Why, if my eyes don't deceive me, ma'am, that's Colonel Dalbiac's lady!

MRS. DALBIAC

Yes, sergeant. I am over here with him, as you have heard, no doubt, and lodging in Salamanca. We lost our way, and got caught in the storm, and want shelter awhile.

SERGEANT

Certainly, ma'am. I'll give you an escort back as soon as the division has crossed and the weather clears.

MRS. PRESCOTT (anxiously)

Have you heard, sergeant, if there's to be a battle to-morrow?

SERGEANT

Yes, ma'am. Everything shows it.

MRS. DALBIAC (to MRS. PRESCOTT)

Our news would have passed us in. We have wasted six pesetas.

MRS. PRESCOTT (mournfully)

I don't mind that so much as that I have brought the children from Ireland. This coming battle frightens me!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

This is her prescient pang of widowhood.
Ere Salamanca clang to-morrow's close
She'll find her consort stiff among the slain!

The infantry regiments now reach the ford. The storm increases in strength, the stream flows more furiously; yet the columns of foot enter it and begin crossing. The lightning is continuous; the faint lantern in the ford-house is paled by the sheets of fire without, which flap round the bayonets of the crossing men and reflect upon the foaming torrent.

CHORUS OF PITIES (aerial music)

The skies fling flame on this ancient land!
And drenched and drowned is the burnt blown sand
That spreads its mantle of yellow-grey
Round old Salmantica to-day;
While marching men come, band on band,
Who read not as a reprimand
To mortal moils that, as 'twere planned
In mockery of their mimic fray,
The skies fling flame.

Since sad Coruña's desperate stand
Horrors unsummed, with heavy hand,
Have smitten such as these! But they
Still headily pursue their way,
Though flood and foe confront them, and
The skies fling flame.

The whole of the English division gets across by degrees, and their invisible tramp is heard ascending the opposite heights as the lightnings dwindle and the spectacle disappears.

SCENE III

THE FIELD OF SALAMANCA

The battlefield—an undulating and sandy expanse—is lying under the sultry sun of a July afternoon. In the immediate left foreground rises boldly a detached dome-like hill known as the Lesser Arapeile, now held by English troops. Further back, and more to the right, rises another and larger hill of the kind—the Greater

Arapeile; this is crowned with French artillery in loud action, and the French marshal, MARMONT, Duke of RAGUSA, stands there. Further to the right, in the same plane, stretch the divisions of the French army. Still further to the right, in the distance, on the Ciudad Rodrigo highway, a cloud of dust denotes the English baggage-train seeking security in that direction. The city of Salamanca itself, and the river Tormes on which it stands, are behind the back of the spectator.

On the summit of the lesser hill, close at hand, WELLINGTON, glass at eye, watches the French division THOMIÈRE, which has become separated from the centre of the French army. Round and near him are aides and other officers, in animated conjecture on MARMONT'S intent, which appears to be a move on the Ciudad Rodrigo road aforesaid, under the impression that the English are about to retreat that way.

The English commander descends from where he was standing to a nook under a wall, where a meal is roughly laid out. Some of his staff are already eating there. WELLINGTON takes a few mouthfuls without sitting down, walks back again, and looks through his glass at the battle as before. Balls from the French artillery fall around.

Enter his aide-de-camp, FITZROY SOMERSET.

FITZROY SOMERSET (hurriedly)

The French make movements of grave consequence—
Extending to the left in mass, my lord.

WELLINGTON

I have just perceived as much; but not the cause.

(He regards longer.)

Marmont's good genius is deserting him!

Shutting up his glass with a snap, WELLINGTON calls several aides and despatches them down the hill. He goes back behind the wall and takes some more mouthfuls.

By God, Fitzroy, if we shan't do it now!

(to SOMERSET).

Mon cher Alava, Marmont est perdu!

(to his SPANISH ATTACHÉ).

FITZROY SOMERSET

Thinking we mean no real attack on him,
He schemes to swoop on our retreating-line.

WELLINGTON

Ay; and to cloak it by this cannonade.
With that in eye he has bundled leftwardly
Thomière's division; mindless that thereby
His wing and centre's mutual maintenance
Dissolves into a yawning vacancy.
So be it. Good. His laxness is our luck!

As a result of the orders sent off by the aides, several British divisions advance across the French front on the Greater Arapeile and elsewhere. The French shower bullets into them; but an English brigade under PACK assails the nearer French on the Arapeile, now beginning to cannonade the English in the hollows beneath.

Light breezes blow towards the French, and they get in their faces the dust-clouds and smoke from the masses of English in motion, and a powerful sun in their eyes.

MARMONT and his staff are sitting on the top of the Greater Arapeile only half a cannon-shot from WELLINGTON on the Lesser; and, like WELLINGTON, he is gazing through his glass.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

Appearing to behold the full-mapped mind
Of his opponent, Marmont arrows forth
Aide after aide towards the forest's hem,
To spirit on his troops out-trailing thence,
And prop the lone division Thomière,
For whose recall his voice has rung in vain.
Wellington mounts and seeks out Pakenham,
Who pushes to the arena from the right,
And, spurting to the left of Marmont's line,
Shakes Thomière with lunges leonine.

When the manœuvre's meaning hits his sense,
Marmont hies hotly to the imperilled place,
Where see him fall, sore smitten.—Bonnet rides

And dons the burden of the chief command,
Marking dismayed the Thomière column there
Shut up by Pakenham like bellows-folds
Against the English Fourth and Fifth hard by;
And while thus crushed, Dragoon-Guards and Dragoons,
Under Le Marchant's hands (of Guernsey he),
Are launched upon them by Sir Stapleton,
And their scathed files are double-scathed anon.

Cotton falls wounded. Pakenham's bayoneteers
Shape for the charge from column into rank;
And Thomière finds death thereat point-blank!

SEMICHORUS I OF THE PITIES (aerial music)

In fogs of dust the cavalries hoof the ground;
Their prancing squadrons shake the hills around:
Le Marchant's heavies bear with ominous bound
Against their opposites!

SEMICHORUS II

A bullet crying along the cloven air
Gouges Le Marchant's groin and rankles there;
In Death's white sleep he soon joins Thomière,
And all he has fought for, quits!

In the meantime the battle has become concentrated in the middle hollow, and WELLINGTON descends thither from the English Arapeile.

The fight grows fiercer. COLE and LEITH now fall wounded; then BERESFORD, who directs the Portuguese, is struck down and borne away. On the French side fall BONNET who succeeded MARMONT in command, MANNE, CLAUSEL, and FEREY, the last hit mortally.

Now fortune sways in favour of the English, now in favour of the French. WELLINGTON sees that the crisis has come, and orders up his reserve. The fresh muscle and spirit turn the scale, and the French abandon the Greater Arapeile.

Their disordered main body retreats into the forest and disappears; and just as darkness sets in, the English stand alone on the crest, the distant plain being lighted only by musket-flashes from the vanishing enemy. In the close foreground vague figures on horseback are audible in the gloom.

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

I thought they looked as they'd be scurrying soon!

VOICE OF AN AIDE

Foy bears into the wood in middling trim;
Maucune strikes out for Alba-Castle bridge.

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Speed the pursuit, then, towards the Huerta ford;
Their only scantling of escape lies there;
The river coops them semicircle-wise,
And we shall have them like a swathe of grass
Within a sickle's curve!

VOICE OF AIDE

Too late, my lord.
They are crossing by the aforesaid bridge at Alba.

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Impossible. The guns of Carlos rake it
Sheer from the castle walls.

VOICE OF AIDE

Tidings have sped
Just now therefrom, to this undreamed effect:
That Carlos has withdrawn the garrison:
The French command the Alba bridge themselves!

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Blast him, he's disobeyed his orders, then!
How happened this? How long has it been known?

VOICE OF AIDE

Some ladies some few hours have rumoured it,
But unbelieved.

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Well, what's done can't be undone. . . .
By God, though, they've just saved themselves thereby
From capture to a man!

VOICE OF A GENERAL

We've not struck ill,
Despite this slip, my lord. . . . And have you heard
That Colonel Dalbiac's wife rode in the charge
Behind her spouse to-day?

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Did she though: did she!
Why that must be Susanna, whom I know—
A Wessex woman, blithe, and somewhat fair. . . .
Not but that great irregularities
Arise from such exploits.—And was it she
I noticed wandering to and fro below here,
Just as the French retired?

VOICE OF ANOTHER OFFICER

Ah no, my lord.
That was the wife of Prescott of the Seventh,
Hoping beneath the heel of hopelessness,
As these young women will!—Just about sunset
She found him lying dead and bloody there,
And in the dusk we bore them both away.[1]

[1] The writer has been unable to discover what became of this unhappy lady and her orphaned infants.—(The foregoing note, which appeared in the first edition of this drama, was the means of bringing from a descendant of the lady referred to the information that she remarried, and lived and died at Venice; and that both her children grew up and did well.—1909.)

VOICE OF WELLINGTON

Well, I'm damned sorry for her. Though I wish
The women-folk would keep them to the rear:
Much awkwardness attends their pottering round!

The talking shapes disappear, and as the features of the field grow undistinguishable the comparative quiet is broken by gay notes from guitars and castanets in the direction of the city, and other sounds of popular rejoicing at Wellington's victory. People come dancing out from the town, and the merry-making continues till midnight, when it ceases, and darkness and silence prevail everywhere.

SEMICHORUS I OF THE YEARS (aerial music)

What are Space and Time? A fancy!—
Lo, by Vision's necromancy
Muscovy will now unroll;
Where for cork and olive-tree
Starveling firs and birches be.

SEMICHORUS II

Though such features lie afar
From events Peninsular,
These, amid their dust and thunder,
Form with those, as scarce asunder,
Parts of one compacted whole.

CHORUS

Marmont's Aide, then, like a swallow
Let us follow, follow, follow,
Over hill and over hollow,
Past the plains of Teute and Pole!

There is semblance of a sound in the darkness as of a rushing through the air.

SCENE IV

THE FIELD OF BORODINO

Borodino, seventy miles west of Moscow, is revealed in a bird's-eye view from a point above the position of the French Grand Army, advancing on the Russian capital.

We are looking east, towards Moscow and the army of Russia, which bars the way thither. The sun of latter summer, sinking behind our backs, floods the whole prospect, which is mostly wild, uncultivated land with patches of birch-trees. NAPOLÉON'S army has just arrived on the scene, and is making its bivouac for the night, some of the later regiments not having yet come up. A dropping fire of musketry from skirmishers ahead keeps snapping through the air. The Emperor's tent stands in a ravine in the foreground amid the squares of the Old Guard. Aides and other officers are chatting outside. The point of view lowers.

Enter NAPOLÉON, who dismounts, speaks to some of his suite, and disappears inside his tent. An interval follows, during which the sun dips.

Enter COLONEL FABVRIER, aide-de-camp of MARMONT, just arrived from Spain. An officer-in-waiting goes into NAPOLÉON'S tent to announce FABVRIER, the Colonel meanwhile talking to those outside.

AN AIDE

Important tidings thence, I make no doubt?

FABVRIER

Marmont repulsed on Salamanca field,
And well-nigh slain, is the best tale I bring!

A silence. A coughing heard in NAPOLÉON'S tent.

Whose rheumy throat distracts the quiet so?

AIDE

The Emperor's. He is thus the livelong day.

COLONEL FABVRIER is shown into the tent. An interval. Then the husky accents of NAPOLÉON within, growing louder and louder.

VOICE OF NAPOLÉON

If Marmont—so I gather from these lines—
Had let the English and the Spanish be,
They would have bent from Salamanca back,
Offering no battle, to our profiting!
We should have been delivered this disaster,
Whose bruit will harm us more than aught besides
That has befallen in Spain!

VOICE OF FABVRIER

I fear so, sire.

VOICE OF NAPOLÉON

He forced a conflict, to cull laurel crowns
Before King Joseph should arrive to share them!

VOICE OF FABVRIER

The army's ardour for your Majesty,
Its courage, its devotion to your cause,
Cover a myriad of the Marshal's sins.

VOICE OF NAPOLÉON

Why gave he battle without biddance, pray,
From the supreme commander? Here's the crime
Of insubordination, root of woes! . . .
The time well chosen, and the battle won,
The English succours there had sidled off,
And their annoy in the Peninsula
Embarrassed us no more. Behoves it me,
Some day, to face this Wellington myself!
Marmont too plainly is no match for him. . . .
Thus he goes on: "To have preserved command
I would with joy have changed this early wound
For foulest mortal stroke at fall of day.

One baleful moment damnified the fruit
Of six weeks' wise strategics, whose result
Had loomed so certain!"—(Satirically) Well, we've but his word
As to their wisdom! To define them thus
Would not have struck me but for his good prompting! . . .
No matter: On Moskowa's banks to-morrow
I'll mend his faults upon the Arapeile.
I'll see how I can treat this Russian horde
Which English gold has brought together here
From the four corners of the universe. . . .
Adieu. You'd best go now and take some rest.

FABVRIER reappears from the tent and goes. Enter DE BAUSSET.

DE BAUSSET

The box that came—has it been taken in?

AN OFFICER

Yes, General. 'Tis laid behind a screen
In the outer tent. As yet his Majesty
Has not been told of it.

[DE BAUSSET goes into tent.

After an interval of murmured talk an exclamation bursts from the EMPEROR. In a few minutes he appears at the tent door, a valet following him bearing a picture. The EMPEROR'S face shows traces of emotion.

NAPOLÉON

Bring out a chair for me to poise it on.

Re-enter DE BAUSSET from the tent with a chair.

They all shall see it. Yes, my soldier-sons
Must gaze upon this son of mine own house
In art's presentment! It will cheer their hearts.
That's a good light—just so.

He is assisted by DE BAUSSET to set up the picture in the chair. It is a portrait of the young King of Rome playing at cup-and-ball,

the ball being represented as the globe. The officers standing near are attracted round, and then the officers and soldiers further back begin running up, till there is a great crowd.

Let them walk past,
So that they see him all. The Old Guard first.

The Old Guard is summoned, and marches past surveying the picture; then other regiments.

SOLDIERS

The Emperor and the King of Rome for ever!

When they have marched past and withdrawn, and DE BAUSSET has taken away the picture, NAPOLÉON prepares to re-enter his tent. But his attention is attracted to the Russians. He regards them through his glass.

Enter BESSIÈRES and RAPP.

NAPOLÉON

What slow, weird ambulation do I mark,
Rippling the Russian host?

BESSIÈRES

A progress, sire,
Of all their clergy, vestmented, who bear
An image, said to work strange miracles.

NAPOLÉON watches. The Russian ecclesiastics pass through the regiments, which are under arms, bearing the icon and other religious insignia. The Russian soldiers kneel before it.

NAPOLÉON

Ay! Not content to stand on their own strength,
They try to hire the enginry of Heaven.
I am no theologian, but I laugh
That men can be so grossly logicless,
When war, defensive or aggressive either,
Is in its essence Pagan, and opposed
To the whole gist of Christianity!

BESSIÈRES

'Tis to fanaticize their courage, sire.

NAPOLÉON

Better they'd wake up old Kutúzof.—Rapp,
What think you of to-morrow?

RAPP

Victory;
But, sire, a bloody one!

NAPOLÉON

So I foresee.

The scene darkens, and the fires of the bivouacs shine up ruddily, those of the French near at hand, those of the Russians in a long line across the mid-distance, and throwing a flapping glare into the heavens. As the night grows stiller the ballad-singing and laughter from the French mixes with a slow singing of psalms from their adversaries.

The two multitudes lie down to sleep, and all is quiet but for the sputtering of the green wood fires, which, now that the human tongues are still, seem to hold a conversation of their own.

SCENE V

THE SAME

The prospect lightens with dawn, and the sun rises red. The spacious field of battle is now distinct, its ruggedness being bisected by the great road from Smolensk to Moscow, which runs centrally from beneath the spectator to the furthest horizon. The field is also crossed by the stream Kalotcha, flowing from the right-centre foreground to the left-centre background, thus forming an X with the road aforesaid, intersecting it in mid-distance at the village of Borodino.

Behind this village the Russians have taken their stand in close masses. Opposite stand the French, who have in their centre the Shevardino redoubt to the right of the Kalotcha. Here NAPOLÉON,

in his usual blue-grey uniform, white waistcoat, and white leather breeches, chooses his position with BERTHIER and other officers of his suite.

DUMB SHOW

It is six o'clock, and the firing of a single cannon on the French side proclaims that the battle is beginning. There is a roll of drums, and the right-centre masses, glittering in the level shine, advance under NEY and DAVOUT and throw themselves on the Russians, here defended by redoubts.

The French enter the redoubts, whereupon a slim, small man, GENERAL BAGRATION, brings across a division from the Russian right and expels them resolutely.

Semenovskoye is a commanding height opposite the right of the French, and held by the Russians. Cannon and columns, infantry and cavalry, assault it by tens of thousands, but cannot take it.

Aides gallop through the screeching shot and haze of smoke and dust between NAPOLÉON and his various marshals. The Emperor walks about, looks through his glass, goes to a camp-stool, on which he sits down, and drinks glasses of spirits and hot water to relieve his still violent cold, as may be discovered from his red eyes, raw nose, rheumatic manner when he moves, and thick voice in giving orders.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

So he fulfils the inhuman antickings
He thinks imposed upon him. . . . What says he?

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

He says it is the sun of Austerlitz!

The Russians, so far from being driven out of their redoubts, issue from them towards the French. But they have to retreat, BAGRATION and his Chief of Staff being wounded. NAPOLÉON sips his grog hopefully, and orders a still stronger attack on the great redoubt in the centre.

It is carried out. The redoubt becomes the scene of a huge massacre. In other parts of the field also the action almost ceases to be a battle, and takes the form of wholesale butchery by the thousand, now advantaging one side, now the other.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Thus do the mindless minions of the spell
In mechanized enchantment sway and show
A Will that wills above the will of each,

Yet but the will of all conjunctively;
A fabric of excitement, web of rage,
That permeates as one stuff the weltering whole.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

The ugly horror grossly regnant here
Wakes even the drowsed half-drunken Dictator
To all its vain uncouthness!

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

Murat cries
That on this much-anticipated day
Napoléon's genius flags inoperative.

The firing from the top of the redoubt has ceased. The French have got inside. The Russians retreat upon their rear, and fortify themselves on the heights there. PONIATOWSKI furiously attacks them. But the French are worn out, and fall back to their station before the battle. So the combat dies resultlessly away. The sun sets, and the opposed and exhausted hosts sink to lethargic repose. NAPOLÉON enters his tent in the midst of his lieutenants, and night descends.

SHADE OF THE EARTH

The fumes of nitre and the reek of gore
Make my airs foul and fulsome unto me!

SPIRIT IRONIC

The natural nausea of a nurse, dear Dame.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

Strange: even within that tent no notes of joy
Throb as at Austerlitz! (signifying Napoléon's tent).

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

But mark that roar—
A mash of men's crazed cries entreating mates
To run them through and end their agony;

Boys calling on their mothers, veterans
Blaspheming God and man. Those shady shapes
Are horses, maimed in myriads, tearing round
In maddening pangs, the harnessings they wear
Clanking discordant jingles as they tear!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

It is enough. Let now the scene be closed.

The night thickens.

SCENE VI

MOSCOW

The foreground is an open place amid the ancient irregular streets of the city, which disclose a jumble of architectural styles, the Asiatic prevailing over the European. A huge triangular white-walled fortress rises above the churches and coloured domes on a hill in the background, the central feature of which is a lofty tower with a gilded cupola, the Ivan Tower. Beneath the battlements of this fortress the Moskva River flows.

An unwonted rumbling of wheels proceeds from the cobble-stoned streets, accompanied by an incessant cracking of whips.

DUMB SHOW

Travelling carriages, teams, and waggons, laden with pictures, carpets, glass, silver, china, and fashionable attire, are rolling out of the city, followed by foot-passengers in streams, who carry their most precious possessions on their shoulders. Others bear their sick relatives, caring nothing for their goods, and mothers go laden with their infants. Others drive their cows, sheep, and goats, causing much obstruction. Some of the populace, however, appear apathetic and bewildered, and stand in groups asking questions.

A thin man with piercing eyes gallops about and gives stern orders.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Whose is the form seen ramping restlessly,
Geared as a general, keen-eyed as a kite,

Mid this mad current of close-filed confusion;
High-ordering, smartening progress in the slow,
And goading those by their own thoughts o'er-goaded;
Whose emissaries knock at every door
In rhythmal rote, and groan the great events
The hour is pregnant with?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Rostopchin he,
The city governor, whose name will ring
Far down the forward years uncannily!

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

His arts are strange, and strangely do they move him:—
To store the stews with stuffs inflammable,
To bid that pumps be wrecked, captives enlarged
And primed with brands for burning, are the intents
His warnings to the citizens outshade!

When the bulk of the populace has passed out eastwardly the Russian army retreating from Borodino also passes through the city and into the country beyond without a halt. They mostly move in solemn silence, though many soldiers rush from their ranks and load themselves with spoil.

When they are got together again and have marched out, there goes by on his horse a strange scarred old man with a foxy look, a swollen neck and head, and a hunched figure. He is KUTÚZOF, surrounded by his lieutenants. Away in the distance by other streets and bridges with other divisions pass in like manner GENERALS BENNIGSEN, BARCLAY DE TOLLY, DOKHTÓROF, the mortally wounded BAGRATION in a carriage, and other generals, all in melancholy procession one way, like autumnal birds of passage. Then the rear-guard passes under MILORADÓVITCH.

Next comes a procession of another kind.

A long string of carts with wounded men is seen, which trails out of the city behind the army. Their clothing is soiled with dried blood, and the bandages that enwrap them are caked with it.

The greater part of this migrant multitude takes the high road to Vladimir.

SCENE VII

THE SAME. OUTSIDE THE CITY

A hill forms the foreground, called the Hill of Salutation, near the Smolensk road.

Herefrom the city appears as a splendid panorama, with its river, its gardens, and its curiously grotesque architecture of domes and spires. It is the peacock of cities to Western eyes, its roofs twinkling in the rays of the September sun, amid which the ancient citadel of the Tsars—the Kremlin—forms a centre-piece.

There enter on the hill at a gallop NAPOLÉON, MURAT, EUGÈNE, NEY, DARU, and the rest of the Imperial staff. The French advance-guard is drawn up in order of battle at the foot of the hill, and the long columns of the Grand Army stretch far in the rear. The Emperor and his marshals halt, and gaze at Moscow.

NAPOLÉON

Ha! There she is at last. And it was time.

He looks round upon his army, its numbers attenuated to one-fourth of those who crossed the Niemen so joyfully.

Yes: it was time. . . . *Now* what says Alexander!

DARU

This is a foil to Salamanca, sire!

DAVOUT

What scores of bulbous church-tops gild the sky!
Souls must be rotten in this region, sire,
To need so much repairing!

NAPOLÉON

Ay—no doubt. . . .
Prithee march briskly on, to check disorder,
(to Murat).

Hold word with the authorities forthwith,

(to Durasnel).

Tell them that they may swiftly swage their fears,
Safe in that mercy I by rule extend
To vanquished ones. I wait the city keys,
And will receive the Governor's submission
With courtesy due. Eugène will guard the gate
To Petersburg there leftward. You, Davout,
The gate to Smolensk in the centre here
Which we shall enter by.

VOICES OF ADVANCE-GUARD

Moscow! Moscow!
This, this is Moscow city. Rest at last!

The words are caught up in the rear by veterans who have entered the chief capitals of Europe except London, and are echoed from rank to rank. There is a far-extended clapping of hands, like the babble of waves, and companies of foot run in disorder towards high ground to behold the spectacle, waving their shakos on their bayonets.

The army now marches on, and NAPOLÉON and his suite disappear citywards from the Hill of Salutation.

The day wanes ere the host has passed, and dusk begins to prevail, when tidings reach the rear-guard that cause dismay. They have been sent back lip by lip from the front.

SPIRIT IRONIC

An anticlimax to Napoléon's dream!

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

They say no Governor attends with keys
To offer his submission gracefully.
The streets are solitudes, the houses sealed,
And stagnant silence reigns, save where intrudes
The rumbling of their own artillery wheels,
And their own foot-files' measured march along.
"Moscow deserted? What a monstrous thing!"—
He shrugs his shoulders soon, contemptuously;
"This, then, is how Muscovy fights!" cries he.

Meanwhile Murat has gained the Kremlin gates,
And finds them closed against him. Battered these,
The fort reverberates vacant as the streets
But for some grinning wretches gaoled there.
Enchantment seems to sway from quay to keep,
And lock commotion in a century's sleep.

NAPOLÉON, reappearing in front of the city, follows MURAT into it, and is again lost to view. He has entered the Kremlin.

An interval. Something becomes visible on the summit of the Ivan Tower.

CHORUS OF RUMOURS (aerial music)

Mark you thereon a small lone figure gazing
Upon his hard-gained goal? It is He!
The startled crows, their broad black pinions raising,
Forsake their haunts, and wheel disquietedly.

The scene slowly darkens.

Midnight hangs over the city. In the blackness to the north of where the Kremlin stands appears what at first sight seems a lurid, malignant star. It waxes larger. Almost simultaneously a north-east wind rises, and the light glows and sinks with the gusts, proclaiming a fire, which soon grows large enough to irradiate the fronts of adjacent buildings, and to show that it is creeping on towards the Kremlin itself, the walls of that fortress which face the flames emerging from their previous shade.

The fire can be seen breaking out also in numerous other quarters. All the conflagrations increase, and become, as those at first detached group themselves together, one huge furnace, whence streamers of flame reach up to the sky, brighten the landscape far around, and show the houses as if it were day. The blaze gains the Kremlin, and licks its walls, but does not kindle it. Explosions and hissings are constantly audible, amid which can be fancied cries and yells of people caught in the combustion. Large pieces of canvas aflare sail away on the gale like balloons. Cocks crow, thinking it sunrise, ere they are burnt to death.

SCENE VIII

THE SAME. THE INTERIOR OF THE KREMLIN

A chamber containing a bed on which NAPOLÉON has been lying. It is not yet daybreak, and the flapping light of the conflagration without shines in at the narrow windows.

NAPOLÉON is discovered dressed, but in disorder and unshaven. He is walking up and down the room in agitation. There are present CAULAINCOURT, BESSIÈRES, and many of the marshals of his guard, who stand in silent perplexity.

NAPOLÉON (sitting down on the bed)

No: I'll not go! It is themselves who have done it.
My God, they are Scythians and barbarians still!

Enter MORTIER (just made Governor).

MORTIER

Sire, there's no means of fencing with the flames.
My creed is that these scurvy Muscovites,
Knowing our men's repute for recklessness,
Have fired the town, as if 'twere we had done it,
To burn our weary warriors and yourself
As by our own crazed act!

GENERAL LARIBOISIÈRE, an aged man, enters and approaches NAPOLÉON.

LARIBOISIÈRE

The wind howls higher!
Will you permit one so full-summed in years,
One so devoted, sire, to speak his mind?
It is that your long lingering here entails
Much risk for you, your army, and ourselves,
In the embarrassment it throws on us
While taking steps to seek security,
By hindering venturous means.

Enter MURAT, PRINCE EUGÈNE, and the PRINCE OF NEUFCHÂTEL.

MURAT

There is no choice
But leaving, sire. Enormous bulks of powder
Lie housed beneath us; and outside these panes
A park of our artillery stands unscreened.

NAPOLÉON (saturninely)

What I have won I disincline to cede!

VOICE OF A GUARD (without)

The Kremlin is aflame!

They look at each other. Two officers of NAPOLÉON'S guard and an interpreter enter, with one of the Russian military police as a prisoner.

FIRST OFFICER

We have caught this man
Firing the Kremlin: yea, in the very act!
It is extinguished temporarily,
We know not for how long.

NAPOLÉON

Inquire of him
What Satan set him on. (They inquire.)

SECOND OFFICER

The governor,
He says; the Count Rostopchin, sire.

NAPOLÉON

So! Even the ancient Kremlin is not sanct
From their infernal scheme! Go, take him out;
Make him a quick example to the rest.

Exeunt guards with their prisoner to the court below, whence a musket-volley resounds in a few minutes. Meanwhile the flames

pop and spit more loudly, and the window-panes of the room they stand in crack and fall in fragments.

Incendiarism afoot, and we unware
Of what foul tricks may follow, I will go.
Outwitted here, we'll march on Petersburg,
The devil if we won't!

The marshals murmur and shake their heads.

BESSIÈRES

Your pardon, sire,
But we are all convinced that weather, time,
Provisions, roads, equipment, mettle, mood,
Serve not for such a perilous enterprise.

NAPOLÉON remains in gloomy silence. Enter BERTHIER.

NAPOLÉON (apathetically)

Well, Berthier. More misfortunes?

BERTHIER

News is brought,
Sire, of the Russian army's whereabouts.
That fox Kutúzof, after marching east
As if he were conducting his whole force
To Vladimir, when at the Riazan Road
Down-doubled sharply south, and in a curve
Has wheeled round Moscow, making for Kalouga,
To strike into our base, and cut us off.

MURAT

Another reason against Petersburg!
Come what come may, we must defeat that army,
To keep a sure retreat through Smolensk on
To Lithuania.

NAPOLÉON (jumping up)

I must act! We'll leave,
Or we shall let this Moscow be our tomb.
May Heaven curse the author of this war—
Ay, him, that Russian minister, self-sold
To England, who fomented it.—'Twas he
Dragged Alexander into it, and me!

The marshals are silent with looks of incredulity, and Caulaincourt shrugs his shoulders.

Now no more words; but hear. Eugène and Ney
With their divisions fall straight back upon
The Petersburg and Zwenigarod Roads;
Those of Davout upon the Smolensk route.
I will retire meanwhile to Petrowskoi.
Come, let us go.

NAPOLÉON and the marshals move to the door. In leaving, the Emperor pauses and looks back.

I fear that this event
Marks the beginning of a train of ills. . . .
Moscow was meant to be my rest,
My refuge, and—it vanishes away!

[Exeunt NAPOLÉON, marshals, etc.

The smoke grows denser and obscures the scene.

SCENE IX

THE ROAD FROM SMOLENSKO INTO LITHUANIA

The season is far advanced towards winter. The point of observation is high amongst the clouds, which, opening and shutting fitfully to the wind, reveal the earth as a confused expanse merely.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Where are we? And why are we where we are?

SHADE OF THE EARTH

Above a wild waste garden-plot of mine
Nigh bare in this late age, and now grown chill,
Lithuania called by some. I gather not
Why we haunt here, where I can work no charm
Either upon the ground or over it.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

The wherefore will unfold. The rolling brume
That parts, and joins, and parts again below us
In ragged restlessness, unscreens by fits
The quality of the scene.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

I notice now
Primeval woods, pine, birch—the skinny growths
That can sustain life well where earth affords
But sustenance elsewhere yclept starvation.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

And what see you on the far land-verge there,
Labouring from eastward towards our longitude?

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

An object like a dun-piled caterpillar,
Shuffling its length in painful heaves along,
Hitherward. . . . Yea, what is this Thing we see
Which, moving as a single monster might,
Is yet not one but many?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Even the Army
Which was once called the Grand; now in retreat
From Moscow's muteness, urged by That within it;
Together with its train of followers—
Men, matrons, babes, in brabbling multitudes.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

And why such flight?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Recorders, rise and say.

RECORDING ANGEL I (in minor plain-song)

The host has turned from Moscow where it lay,
And Israel-like, moved by some master-sway,
Is made to wander on and waste away!

ANGEL II

By track of Tarutino first it flits;
Thence swerving, strikes at old Jaroslawitz;
The which, accurst by slaughtering swords, it quits.

ANGEL I

Harassed, it treads the trail by which it came,
To Borodino, field of bloodshot fame,
Whence stare unburied horrors beyond name!

ANGEL II

And so and thus it nears Smolensko's walls,
And, stayed its hunger, starts anew its crawls,
Till floats down one white morsel, which appals.

What has floated down from the sky upon the Army is a flake of snow. Then come another and another, till natural features, hitherto varied with the tints of autumn, are confounded, and all is phantasmal grey and white.

The caterpillar shape still creeps laboriously nearer, but instead of increasing in size by the rules of perspective, it gets more attenuated, and there are left upon the ground behind it minute parts of itself, which are speedily flaked over, and remain as white pimples by the wayside.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

These atoms that drop off are snuffed-out souls
Who are enghosted by the caressing snow.

Pines rise mournfully on each side of the nearing object; ravens in flocks advance with it overhead, waiting to pick out the eyes of strays who fall. The snowstorm increases, descending in tufts which can hardly be shaken off. The sky seems to join itself to the land. The marching figures drop rapidly, and almost immediately become white grave-mounds.

Endowed with enlarged powers of audition as of vision, we are struck by the mournful taciturnity that prevails. Nature is mute. Save for the incessant flogging of the wind-broken and lacerated horses there are no sounds.

With growing nearness more is revealed. In the glades of the forest, parallel to the French columns, columns of Russians are seen to be moving. And when the French presently reach Krasnoye they are surrounded by packs of cloaked Cossacks, bearing lances like huge needles a dozen feet long. The fore-part of the French army gets through the town; the rear is assaulted by these and by infantry and artillery.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

The strange, one-eyed, white-shakoed, scarred old man,
Ruthlessly heading every onset made,
I seem to recognize.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Kutúzof he:
The ceaselessly-attacked one, Michael Ney;
A pair as stout as thou, Earth, ever hast twinned!
Kutúzof, ten years younger, would extirp
The invaders, and our drama finish here,
With Bonaparte a captive or a corpse.
But he is old; death even has beckoned him;
And thus the so near-seeming happens not.

NAPOLÉON himself can be discerned amid the rest, marching on foot through the snowflakes, in a fur coat and with a stout staff in his hand. Further back NEY is visible with the remains of the rear.

There is something behind the regular columns like an articulated tail, and as they draw on, it shows itself to be a disorderly rabble of followers of both sexes. So the whole miscellany arrives at the fore-

ground, where it is checked by a large river across the track. The soldiers themselves, like the rabble, are in motley raiment, some wearing rugs for warmth, some quilts and curtains, some even petticoats and other women's clothing. Many are delirious from hunger and cold.

But they set about doing what is a necessity for the least hope of salvation, and throw a bridge across the stream.

The point of vision descends to earth, close to the scene of action.

SCENE X

THE BRIDGE OF THE BERESINA

The bridge is over the Beresina at Studzianka. On each side of the river are swampy meadows, now hard with frost, while further back are dense forests. Ice floats down the deep black stream in large cakes.

DUMB SHOW

The French sappers are working up to their shoulders in the water at the building of the bridge. Those so immersed work till, stiffened with ice to immobility, they die from the chill, when others succeed them.

Cavalry meanwhile attempt to swim their horses across, and some infantry try to wade through the stream.

Another bridge is begun hard by, the construction of which advances with greater speed; and it becomes fit for the passage of carriages and artillery.

NAPOLÉON is seen to come across to the homeward bank, which is the foreground of the scene. A good portion of the army also, under DAVOUT, NEY, and OUDINOT, lands by degrees on this side. But VICTOR'S corps is yet on the left or Moscow side of the stream, moving towards the bridge, and PARTONNEAUX with the rear-guard, who has not yet crossed, is at Borissow, some way below, where there is an old permanent bridge partly broken.

Enter with speed from the distance the Russians under TCHAPLITZ. More under TCHICHAGOFF enter the scene down the river on the left or further bank, and cross by the old bridge of Borissow. But they are too far from the new crossing to intercept the French as yet.

PLATOFF with his Cossacks next appears on the stage which is to be such a tragic one. He comes from the forest and approaches the left bank likewise. So also does WITTGENSTEIN, who strikes in

between the uncrossed VICTOR and PARTONNEAUX. PLATOFF thereupon descends on the latter, who surrenders with the rear-guard; and thus seven thousand more are cut off from the already emaciated Grand Army.

TCHAPLITZ, of TCHICHAGOFF'S division, has meanwhile got round by the old bridge at Borissow to the French side of the new one, and attacks OUDINOT; but he is repulsed with the strength of despair. The French lose a further five thousand in this.

We now look across the river at VICTOR and his division, not yet over, and still defending the new bridges. WITTGENSTEIN descends upon him; but he holds his ground.

The determined Russians set up a battery of twelve cannon, so as to command the two new bridges, with the confused crowd of soldiers, carriages, and baggage, pressing to cross. The battery discharges into the surging multitude. More Russians come up, and, forming a semicircle round the bridges and the mass of French, fire yet more hotly on them with round shot and canister. As it gets dark the flashes light up the strained faces of the fugitives. Under the discharge and the weight of traffic, the bridge for the artillery gives way, and the throngs upon it roll shrieking into the stream and are drowned.

SEMICHORUS I OF THE PITIES (aerial music)

So loudly swell their shrieks as to be heard above the roar of guns and the wailful wind,
Giving in one brief cry their last wild word on that mock life through which they have harlequined!

SEMICHORUS II

To the other bridge the living heap betakes itself, the weak pushed over by the strong;
They loop together by their clutch like snakes; in knots they are submerged and borne along.

CHORUS

Then women are seen in the waterflow—limply bearing their infants between wizened white arms stretching above;
Yea, motherhood, sheerly sublime in her last despairing, and lighting her darkest declension with limitless love.

Meanwhile TCHICHAGOFF has come up with his twenty-seven thousand men, and falls on OUDINOT, NEY, and "the Sacred Squadron." Altogether we see forty or fifty thousand assailing eighteen thousand half-naked, badly armed wretches, emaciated with hunger and encumbered with several thousands of sick, wounded, and stragglers.

VICTOR and his rear-guard, who have protected the bridges all day, come over themselves at last. No sooner have they done so than the final bridge is set on fire. Those who are upon it burn or drown; those who are on the further side have lost their last chance, and perish either in attempting to wade the stream or at the hands of the Russians.

SEMICHORUS I OF THE PITIES (aerial music)

What will be seen in the morning light?
What will be learnt when the spring breaks bright,
And the frost unlocks to the sun's soft sight?

SEMICHORUS II

Death in a thousand motley forms;
Charred corpses hooking each other's arms
In the sleep that defies all war's alarms!

CHORUS

Pale cysts of souls in every stage,
Still bent to embraces of love or rage,—
Souls passed to where History pens no page.

The flames of the burning bridge go out as it consumes to the water's surface, and darkness mantles all, nothing continuing but the purl of the river and the clickings of floating ice.

SCENE XI

THE OPEN COUNTRY BETWEEN SMORGONI AND WILNA

The winter is more merciless, and snow continues to fall upon a deserted expanse of unenclosed land in Lithuania. Some scattered birch bushes merge in a forest in the background.

It is growing dark, though nothing distinguishes where the sun sets. There is no sound except that of a shuffling of feet in the direction of a bivouac. Here are gathered tattered men like skeletons. Their noses and ears are frost-bitten, and pus is oozing from their eyes.

These stricken shades in a limbo of gloom are among the last survivors of the French army. Few of them carry arms. One squad, ploughing through snow above their knees, and with icicles dangling from their hair that clink like glass-lustres as they walk, go into the birch wood, and are heard chopping. They bring back boughs, with which they make a screen on the windward side, and contrive to light a fire. With their swords they cut rashers from a dead horse, and grill them in the flames, using gunpowder for salt to eat them with. Two others return from a search, with a dead rat and some candle-ends. Their meal shared, some try to repair their gaping shoes and to tie up their feet, that are chilblained to the bone.

A straggler enters, who whispers to one or two soldiers of the group. A shudder runs through them at his words.

FIRST SOLDIER (dazed)

What—gone, do you say? Gone?

STRAGGLER

Yes, I say gone!
He left us at Smorgoni hours ago.
The Sacred Squadron even he has left behind.
By this time he's at Warsaw or beyond,
Full pace for Paris.

SECOND SOLDIER (jumping up wildly)

Gone? How did he go?
No, surely! He could not desert us so!

STRAGGLER

He started in a carriage, with Roustan
The Mameluke on the box: Caulaincourt, too,
Was inside with him. Monton and Duroc
Rode on a sledge behind.—The order bade
That we should not be told it for a while.

Other soldiers spring up as they realize the news, and stamp hither and thither, impotent with rage, grief, and despair, many in their physical weakness sobbing like children.

SPIRIT SINISTER

Good. It is the selfish and unconscionable characters who are so much regretted.

STRAGGLER

He felt, or feigned, he ought to leave no longer
A land like Prussia 'twixt himself and home.
There was great need for him to go, he said,
To quiet France, and raise another army
That shall replace our bones.

SEVERAL (distractedly)

Deserted us!
Deserted us!—O, after all our pangs
We shall see France no more!

Some become insane, and go dancing round. One of them sings.

MAD SOLDIER'S SONG

I

Ha, for the snow and hoar!
Ho, for our fortune's made!
We can shape our bed without sheets to spread,
And our graves without a spade.
So foolish Life adieu,
And ingrate Leader too.

—Ah, but we loved you true!
Yet—he-he-he! and ho-ho-ho!—
We'll never return to you.

II

What can we wish for more?
Thanks to the frost and flood
We are grinning crones—thin bags of bones
Who once were flesh and blood.
So foolish Life adieu,
And ingrate Leader too.
—Ah, but we loved you true!
Yet—he-he-he! and ho-ho-ho!—
We'll never return to you.

Exhausted, they again crouch round the fire. Officers and privates press together for warmth. Other stragglers arrive, and sit at the backs of the first. With the progress of the night the stars come out in unusual brilliancy, Sirius and those in Orion flashing like stilettos; and the frost stiffens.

The fire sinks and goes out; but the Frenchmen do not move. The day dawns, and still they sit on.

In the background enter some light horse of the Russian army, followed by KUTÚZOF himself and a few of his staff. He presents a terrible appearance now—bravely serving though slowly dying, his face puffed with the intense cold, his one eye staring out as he sits in a heap in the saddle, his head sunk into his shoulders. The whole detachment pauses at the sight of the French asleep. They shout; but the bivouackers give no sign.

KUTÚZOF

Go, stir them up! We slay not sleeping men.

The Russians advance and prod the French with their lances.

RUSSIAN OFFICER

Prince, here's a curious picture. They are dead.

KUTÚZOF (with indifference)

Oh, naturally. After the snow was down
I marked a sharpening of the air last night.

We shall be stumbling on such frost-baked meats
Most of the way to Wilna.

OFFICER (examining the bodies)

They all sit
As they were living still, but stiff as horns;
And even the colour has not left their cheeks,
Whereon the tears remain in strings of ice.—
It was a marvel they were not consumed:
Their clothes are cindered by the fire in front,
While at their back the frost has caked them hard.

KUTÚZOF

'Tis well. So perish Russia's enemies!

Exeunt KUTÚZOF, his staff, and the detachment of horse in the direction of Wilna; and with the advance of day the snow resumes its fall, slowly burying the dead bivouackers.

SCENE XII

PARIS. THE TUILERIES

An antechamber to the EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE's bedroom, at half-past eleven on a December night. The DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO and another lady-in-waiting are discovered talking to the Empress.

MARIE LOUISE

I have felt unapt for anything to-night,
And I will now retire.

She goes into her child's room adjoining.

DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO

For some long while
There has come no letter from the Emperor,

And Paris brims with ghastly rumourings
About the far campaign. Not being beloved,
The town is over dull for her alone.

Re-enter MARIE LOUISE.

MARIE LOUISE

The King of Rome is sleeping in his cot
Sweetly and safe. Now, ladies, I am going.

She withdraws. Her tiring-women pass through into her chamber. They presently return and go out. A manservant enters, and bars the window-shutters with numerous bolts. Exit manservant. The Duchess retires. The other lady-in-waiting rises to go into her bedroom, which adjoins that of the Empress.

Men's voices are suddenly heard in the corridor without. The lady-in-waiting pauses with parted lips. The voices grow louder. The lady-in-waiting screams.

MARIE LOUISE hastily re-enters in a dressing-gown thrown over her night-clothes.

MARIE LOUISE

Great God, what altercation can that be?
I had just verged on sleep when it aroused me!

A thumping is heard at the door.

VOICE OF NAPOLÉON (without)

Holà! Pray let me in! Unlock the door!

LADY-IN-WAITING

Heaven's mercy on us! What man may it be
At such an hour as this?

MARIE LOUISE

O it is he!

The lady-in-waiting unlocks the door. NAPOLÉON enters, scarcely recognizable, in a fur cloak and hood over his ears. He throws off the cloak and discloses himself to be in the shabbiest and muddiest attire. Marie Louise is agitated almost to fainting.

SPIRIT IRONIC

Is it with fright or joy?

MARIE LOUISE

I scarce believe
What my sight tells me! Home, and in such sad garb!

[NAPOLÉON embraces her.

NAPOLÉON

I have had great work in getting in, my dear!
They failed to recognize me at the gates,
Being sceptical at my poor hackney-coach
And poorer baggage. I had to show my face
In a fierce light ere they would let me pass,
And even then they doubted till I spoke.—
What think you, dear, of such a tramp-like spouse?

(He warms his hands at the fire.)

Ha—it is much more comfortable here
Than on the Russian plains!

MARIE LOUISE (timidly)

You have suffered there?—
Your face is hollow, and has lines in it;
No marvel that they did not know you!

NAPOLÉON

Yes:
Disasters many and swift have swooped on me!—
Since crossing—ugh!—the Beresina River
I have been compelled to come incognito;
Ay—as a fugitive and outlaw quite.

MARIE LOUISE

We'll thank Heaven, anyhow, that you are safe.
I had gone to bed, and everybody almost!
What, now, do you require? Some food of course?

The child in the adjoining chamber begins to cry, awakened by the loud tones of NAPOLÉON.

NAPOLÉON

Ah—that's his little voice! I'll in and see him.

MARIE LOUISE

I'll come with you.

NAPOLÉON and the EMPRESS pass into the other room. The lady-in-waiting calls up yawning servants and gives orders. The servants go to execute them.

Re-enter NAPOLÉON and MARIE LOUISE. The lady-in-waiting goes out.

NAPOLÉON

I have said it, dear!
All the disasters summed in the bulletin
Shall be repaired.

MARIE LOUISE

And are they terrible?

NAPOLÉON

Have you not read the last-sent bulletin,
Dear friend?

MARIE LOUISE

No recent bulletin has come.

NAPOLÉON

Ah—I must have outstripped it on the way!

MARIE LOUISE

And where is the Grand Army?

NAPOLÉON

Oh—that's gone.

MARIE LOUISE

Gone? But—gone where?

NAPOLÉON

Gone all to nothing, dear.

MARIE LOUISE (incredulously)

But some six hundred thousand I saw pass
Through Dresden Russia-wards?

NAPOLÉON (flinging himself into a chair)

Well, those men lie—
Or most of them—in layers of bleaching bones
'Twixt here and Moscow. . . . I have been subdued;
But by the elements; and them alone.
Not Russia, but God's sky has conquered me!

(With an appalled look she sits beside him.)

From the sublime to the ridiculous
There's but a step!—I have been saying it
Throughout the leagues of my long journey home—
And that step has been passed in this affair! . . .
Yes, briefly, it is quite ridiculous,
Whichever way you look at it.—Ha-ha!

MARIE LOUISE (simply)

But those six hundred thousand throbbing throats
That cheered me deaf at Dresden, marching east
So full of youth and spirits—all bleached bones—
Ridiculous? Can it be so, dear, to—
Their mothers, say?

NAPOLÉON (with a twitch of displeasure)

You scarcely understand.
I meant the enterprise, and not its stuff. . . .
I had no wish to fight, nor Alexander,
But circumstance impaled us each on each;
The Genius who outshapes my destinies
Did all the rest! Had I but hit success,
Imperial splendour would have worn a crown
Unmatched in long-scrolled Time! . . . Well, leave
that now.—
What do they know about all this in Paris?

MARIE LOUISE

I cannot say. Black rumours fly and croak
Like ravens through the streets, but come to me
Thinned to the vague!—Occurrences in Spain
Breed much disquiet with these other things.
Marmont's defeat at Salamanca field
Ploughed deep into men's brows. The cafés say
Your troops must clear from Spain.

NAPOLÉON

We'll see to that!
I'll find a way to do a better thing;
Though I must have another army first—
Three hundred thousand quite. Fishes as good
Swim in the sea as have come out of it.
But to begin, we must make sure of France,
Disclose ourselves to the good folk of Paris
In daily outings as a family group,
The type and model of domestic bliss
(Which, by the way, we are). And I intend,
Also, to gild the dome of the Invalides
In best gold leaf, and on a novel pattern.

MARIE LOUISE

To gild the dome, dear? Why?

NAPOLÉON

To give them something
To think about. They'll take to it like children,
And argue in the cafés right and left
On its artistic points.—So they'll forget
The woes of Moscow.

A chamberlain-in-waiting announces supper. MARIE LOUISE and NAPOLÉON go out. The room darkens and the scene closes.

ACT SECOND

SCENE I

THE PLAIN OF VITORIA

It is the eve of the longest day in the ensuing year; also the eve of the battle of Vitoria. The English army in the Peninsula, and their Spanish and Portuguese allies, are bivouacking on the western side of the Plain, about six miles from the town.

On some high ground in the left mid-distance may be discerned the MARQUIS OF WELLINGTON'S tent, with GENERALS HILL, PICTON, PONSONBY, GRAHAM, and others of his staff, going in and out in consultation on the momentous event impending. Near the foreground are some hussars sitting round a fire, the evening being damp; their horses are picketed behind. In the immediate front of the scene are some troop-officers talking.

FIRST OFFICER

This grateful rest of four-and-twenty hours
Is priceless for our jaded soldiery;
And we have reconnoitred largely, too;
So the slow day will not have slipped in vain.

SECOND OFFICER
(looking towards the headquarter tent)

By this time they must nearly have dotted down
The methods of our master-stroke to-morrow:
I have no clear conception of its plan,
Even in its leading lines. What is decided?

FIRST OFFICER

There are outshaping three supreme attacks,
As I decipher. Graham's on the left,
To compass which he crosses the Zadorra,
And turns the enemy's right. On our right, Hill
Will start at once to storm the Puebla crests.
The Chief himself, with us here in the centre,
Will lead on by the bridges Tres-Puentes
Over the ridge there, and the Mendoza bridge
A little further up.—That's roughly it;
But much and wide discretionary power
Is left the generals all.

The officers walk away, and the stillness increases, so that the conversation at the hussars' bivouac, a few yards further back, becomes noticeable.

SERGEANT YOUNG[1]

I wonder, I wonder how Stourcastle is looking this summer night, and all the old folks there!

SECOND HUSSAR

You was born there, I think I've heard ye say, Sergeant?

SERGEANT YOUNG

I was. And though I ought not to say it, as father and mother are living there still, 'tis a dull place at times. Now Budmouth-Regis was exactly to my taste when we were there with the Court that summer, and the King and Queen a-wambling about among us like the most everyday old man and woman you ever see. Yes, there was plenty going on, and only a pretty step from home. Altogether we had a fine time!

[1] Thomas Young of Sturminster-Newton; served twenty-one years in the Fifteenth (King's) Hussars; died 1853; fought at Vitoria, Toulouse, and Waterloo.

THIRD HUSSAR

You walked with a girl there for some weeks, Sergeant, if my memory serves?

SERGEANT YOUNG

I did. And a pretty girl 'a was. But nothing came on't. A month afore we struck camp she married a tallow-chandler's dipper of Little Nicholas Lane. I was a good deal upset about it at the time. But one gets over things!

SECOND HUSSAR

'Twas a low taste in the hussy, come to that.—Howsomever, I agree about Budmouth. I never had pleasanter times than when we lay there. You had a song on it, Sergeant, in them days, if I don't mistake?

SERGEANT YOUNG

I had; and have still. 'Twas made up after we left by our bandmaster that used to conduct in front of Gloucester Lodge at the King's Mess every afternoon.

The Sergeant is silent for a minute, then suddenly bursts into melody.

SONG

BUDMOUTH DEARS

I

When we lay where Budmouth Beach is,
O, the girls were fresh as peaches,
With their tall and tossing figures and their eyes of blue and brown!
And our hearts would ache with longing
As we paced from our sing-songing,
With a smart *Clink! Clink!* up the Esplanade and down.

II

They distracted and delayed us
By the pleasant pranks they played us,
And what marvel, then, if troopers, even of regiments of renown,
On whom flashed those eyes divine, O,
Should forget the countersign, O,
As we tore *Clink! Clink!* back to camp above the town.

III

Do they miss us much, I wonder,
Now that war has swept us sunder,
And we roam from where the faces smile to where the faces frown?
And no more behold the features
Of the fair fantastic creatures,
And no more *Clink! Clink!* past the parlours of the town?

IV

Shall we once again there meet them?
Falter fond attempts to greet them?
Will the gay sling-jacket[1] glow again beside the muslin gown?—
Will they archly quiz and con us
With a sideway glance upon us,
While our spurs *Clink! Clink!* up the Esplanade and down?

[Applause from the other hussars.

More songs are sung, the night gets darker, the fires go out, and the camp sleeps.

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[1] Hussars, it may be remembered, used to wear a pelisse, dolman, or "sling-jacket" (as the men called it), which hung loosely over the shoulder. The writer is able to recall the picturesque effect of this uniform.

SCENE II

THE SAME, FROM THE PUEBLA HEIGHTS

It is now day; but a summer fog pervades the prospect. Behind the fog is heard the roll of bass and tenor drums and the clash of cymbals, with notes of the popular march "The Downfall of Paris."

By degrees the fog lifts, and the Plain is disclosed. From this elevation, gazing north, the expanse looks like the palm of a monstrous right hand, a little hollowed, some half-dozen miles across, wherein the ball of the thumb is roughly represented by heights to the east, on which the French centre has gathered; the "Mount of Mars" and of the "Moon" (the opposite side of the palm) by the position of the English on the left or west of the plain; and the "Line of Life" by the Zadorra, an unfordable river running from the town down the plain, and dropping out of it through a pass in the Puebla Heights to the south, just beneath our point of observation —that is to say, towards the wrist of the supposed hand. The left of the English army under GRAHAM would occupy the "mounts" at the base of the fingers; while the bent finger-tips might represent the Cantabrian Hills beyond the plain to the north or back of the scene.

From the aforesaid stony crests of Puebla the white town and church towers of Vitoria can be descried on a slope to the right-rear of the field of battle. A warm rain succeeds the fog for a short while, bringing up the fragrant scents from the fields, vineyards, and gardens, now in the full leafage of June.

DUMB SHOW

All the English forces converge forward—that is, eastwardly—the centre over the west ridges, the right through the Pass to the south, the left down the Bilbao road on the north-west, the bands of the divers regiments striking up the same quick march, "The Downfall of Paris."

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

You see the scene. And yet you see it not.
What do you notice now?

There immediately is shown visually the electric state of mind that animates WELLINGTON, GRAHAM, HILL, KEMPT, PICTON, COLVILLE, and other responsible ones on the British side; and on the French KING JOSEPH stationary on the hill overlooking his own centre, and surrounded by a numerous staff that includes his adviser MARSHAL

JOURDAN, with, far away in the field, GAZAN, D'ERLON, REILLE, and other marshals. This vision, resembling as a whole the interior of a beating brain lit by phosphorescence, in an instant fades again back to the normal.

Anon we see the English hussars with their flying pelisses galloping across the Zadorra on one of the Tres-Puentes in the midst of the field, as had been planned, the English lines in the foreground under HILL pushing the enemy up the slopes; and far in the distance, to the left of Vitoria, whiffs of grey smoke followed by low rumbles show that the left of the English army under GRAHAM is pushing on there.

Bridge after bridge of the half-dozen over the Zadorra is crossed by the British; and WELLINGTON, in the centre with PICTON, seeing the hill and village of Arinez in front of him (eastward) to be weakly held, carries the regiments of the seventh and third divisions in a quick run towards it. Supported by the hussars, they ultimately fight their way to the top, in a chaos of smoke, flame, dust, shouts, and booming echoes, loud-voiced PICTON, in an old blue coat and round hat, swearing as he goes.

Meanwhile the French who are opposed to the English right, in the foreground, have been turned by HILL; the heights are all abandoned, and the columns fall back in a confused throng by the road to Vitoria, hard pressed by the British, who capture abandoned guns amid indescribable tumult, till the French make a stand in front of the town.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

What's toward in the distance?—say!

SEMICHORUS I OF RUMOURS (aerial music)

Fitfully flash strange sights there; yea,
Unwonted spectacles of sweat and scare
Behind the French, that make a stand
With eighty cannon, match in hand.—
Upon the highway from the town to rear
An eddy of distraction reigns,
Where lumbering treasure, baggage-trains,
Padding pedestrians, haze the atmosphere.

SEMICHORUS II

Men, women, and their children fly,
And when the English over-high
Direct their death-bolts, on this billowy throng

Alight the too far-ranging balls,
Wringing out piteous shrieks and calls
From the pale mob, in monotones loud and long.

SEMICHORUS I

To leftward of the distant din
Reille meantime has been driven in
By Graham's measured overmastering might.—
Henceforward, masses of the foe
Withdraw, and, firing as they go,
Pass rightwise from the cockpit out of sight.

CHORUS

The sunset slants an ochreous shine
Upon the English knapsacked line,
Whose glistering bayonets incline
As bends the hot pursuit across the plain;
And tardily behind them goes
Too many a mournful load of those
Found wound-weak; while with stealthy crawl,
As silence wraps the rear of all,
Cloaked creatures of the starlight strip the slain.

SCENE III

THE SAME. THE ROAD FROM THE TOWN

With the going down of the sun the English army finds itself in complete possession of the mass of waggons and carriages distantly beheld from the rear—laden with pictures, treasure, flour, vegetables, furniture, finery, parrots, monkeys, and women—most of the male sojourners in the town having taken to their heels and disappeared across the fields.

The road is choked with these vehicles, the women they carry including wives, mistresses, actresses, dancers, nuns, and prostitutes, which struggle through droves of oxen, sheep, goats, horses, asses, and mules—a Noah's-ark of living creatures in one vast procession.

There enters rapidly in front of this throng a carriage containing KING JOSEPH BONAPARTE and an attendant, followed by another vehicle with luggage.

JOSEPH (inside carriage)

The bare unblinking truth hereon is this:
The Englishry are a pursuing army,
And we a flying brothel! See our men—
They leave their guns to save their mistresses!

The carriage is fired upon from outside the scene. The KING leaps from the vehicle and mounts a horse.

Enter at full gallop from the left CAPTAIN WYNDHAM and a detachment of the Tenth Hussars in chase of the King's carriage; and from the right a troop of French dragoons, who engage with the hussars and hinder pursuit. Exit KING JOSEPH on horseback; afterwards the hussars and dragoons go out fighting.

The British infantry enter irregularly, led by a sergeant of the Eighty-seventh, mockingly carrying MARSHAL JOURDAN'S bâton. The crowd recedes. The soldiers ransack the King's carriages, cut from their frames canvases by Murillo, Velasquez, and Zurbaran, and use them as package-wrappers, throwing the papers and archives into the road.

They next go to a waggon in the background, which contains a large chest. Some of the soldiers burst it with a crash. It is full of money, which rolls into the road. The soldiers begin scrambling, but are restored to order; and they march on.

Enter more companies of infantry, out of control of their officers, who are running behind. They see the dollars, and take up the scramble for them; next ransacking other waggons and abstracting therefrom uniforms, ladies' raiment, jewels, plate, wines, and spirits.

Some array them in the finery, and one soldier puts on a diamond necklace; others load themselves with the money still lying about the road. It begins to rain, and a private who has lost his kit cuts a hole in the middle of a deframed old master, and, putting it over his head, wears it as a poncho.

Enter WELLINGTON and others, grimy and perspiring.

FIRST OFFICER

The men are plundering in all directions!

WELLINGTON

Let 'em. They've striven long and gallantly.
—What documents do I see lying there?

SECOND OFFICER (examining)

The archives of King Joseph's court, my lord;
His correspondence, too, with Bonaparte.

WELLINGTON

We must examine it. It may have use.

Another company of soldiers enters, dragging some equipages that have lost their horses by the traces being cut. The carriages contain ladies, who shriek and weep at finding themselves captives.

What women bring they there?

THIRD OFFICER

Mixed sorts, my lord.
The wives of many young French officers,
The mistresses of more—in male attire.
Yon elegant hussar is one, to wit;
She so disguised is of a Spanish house,—
One of the generals' loves.

WELLINGTON

Well, pack them off
To-morrow to Pamplona, as you can;
We've neither list nor leisure for their charms.
By God, I never saw so many wh——s
In all my life before!

[Exeunt WELLINGTON, officers, and infantry.

A soldier enters with his arm round a lady in rich costume.

SOLDIER

We must be married, my dear.

LADY (not knowing his language)

Anything, sir, if you'll spare my life!

SOLDIER

There's neither parson nor clerk here. But that don't matter—hey?

LADY

Anything, sir, if you'll spare my life!

SOLDIER

And if we've got to unmarry at cockcrow, why, so be it—hey?

LADY

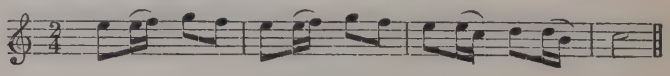
Anything, sir, if you'll spare my life!

SOLDIER

A sensible 'ooman, whatever it is she says; that I can see by her pretty face. Come along then, my dear. There'll be no bones broke, and we'll take our lot with Christian resignation.

[Exeunt soldier and lady.

The crowd thins away as darkness closes in, and the growling of artillery ceases, though the wheels of the flying enemy are still heard in the distance. The fires kindled by the soldiers as they make their bivouacs blaze up in the gloom, and throw their glares a long way, revealing on the slopes of the hills many suffering ones who have not yet been carried in. The last victorious regiment comes up from the rear, fifing and drumming ere it reaches its resting-place the last bars of "The Downfall of Paris":—



SCENE IV

A FÊTE AT VAUXHALL GARDENS

It is the Vitoria festival at Vauxhall. The orchestra of the renowned gardens exhibits a blaze of lamps and candles arranged in the shape of a temple, a great artificial sun glowing at the top, and under it in illuminated characters the words "Vitoria" and "Wellington." The band is playing the new air "The Plains of Vitoria."

All round the colonnade of the rotunda are to be read in like illumination the names of Peninsular victories, underneath them figuring the names of British and Spanish generals who led at those battles, surmounted by wreaths of laurel. The avenues stretching away from the rotunda into the gardens charm the eyes with their mild multitudinous lights, while festoons of lamps hang from the trees elsewhere, and transparencies representing scenes from the war.

The gardens and saloons are crowded, among those present being the KING'S sons—the DUKES OF YORK, CLARENCE, KENT, and CAMBRIDGE—Ambassadors, peers, and peeresses, and other persons of quality, English and foreign.

In the immediate foreground on the left hand is an alcove, the interior of which is in comparative obscurity. Two foreign attachés enter it and sit down.

FIRST ATTACHÉ

Ah—now for the fireworks. They are under the direction of Colonel Congreve.

At the end of an alley, purposely kept dark, fireworks are discharged.

SECOND ATTACHÉ

Very good: very good.—This looks like the Duke of Sussex coming in, I think. Who the lady is with him I don't know.

Enter the DUKE OF SUSSEX in a Highland dress, attended by several officers in like attire. He walks about the gardens with LADY CHARLOTTE CAMPBELL.

First Attaché

People have been paying a mighty price for tickets —as much as fifteen guineas has been offered, I hear. I had to walk up to the gates; the number of coaches struggling outside prevented my driving near. It was as bad as the battle of Vitoria itself.

Second Attaché

So Wellington is made Field-Marshal for this achievement.

First Attaché

Yes. By the by, you have heard of the effect of the battle upon the Conference at Reichenbach?—that Austria is to join Russia and Prussia against France? So much for Napoléon's marriage! I wonder what he thinks of his respected father-in-law now.

Second Attaché

Of course, an enormous subsidy is to be paid to Francis by Great Britain for this face-about?

First Attaché

Yes. As Bonaparte says, English guineas are at the bottom of everything!—Ah, here comes Caroline.

The Princess of Wales arrives, attended by Lady Anne Hamilton and Lady Glenbervie. She is conducted forward by the Duke of Gloucester and Colonel St. Ledger, and wears a white satin train with a dark embroidered bodice, and a green wreath with diamonds.

Repeated hurrahs greet her from the crowd. She bows courteously.

Second Attaché

The people are staunch to her still! . . . You heard, sir, what Austrian Francis said when he learnt of Vitoria?—"A warm climate seems to agree with my son-in-law no better than a cold one."

FIRST ATTACHÉ

Ha-ha-ha!
Marvellous it is how this loud victory
Has couched the late blind Europe's Cabinets.
Would I could spell precisely what was phrased
'Twixt Bonaparte and Metternich at Dresden—
Their final word, I ween, till God knows when!—

SECOND ATTACHÉ

I own to feeling it a sorry thing
That Francis should take English money down
To throw off Bonaparte. 'Tis sordid, mean!
He is his daughter's husband after all.

FIRST ATTACHÉ

Ay; yes! . . . They say she knows not of it yet.

SECOND ATTACHÉ

Poor thing, I daresay it will harry her
When all's revealed. But the inside on't is,
Since Castlereagh's return to power last year
Vienna, like Berlin and Petersburg,
Has harboured England's secret emissaries,
Primed, purse in hand, with the most lavish sums
To knit the league to drag Napoléon down. . . .
(More fireworks.) That's grand.—Here comes one Royal item more.

The DUCHESS OF YORK enters, attended by her ladies and by the HON. B. CRAVEN and COLONEL BARCLAY. She is received with signals of respect.

FIRST ATTACHÉ

She calls not favour forth as Caroline can!

SECOND ATTACHÉ

To end my words:—Though happy for this realm,
Austria's desertion frankly is, by God,
Rank treachery!

FIRST ATTACHÉ

Whatever it is, it means
Two hundred thousand swords for the Allies,
And enemies in batches for Napoléon
Leaping from unknown lairs.—Yes, something tells me
That this is the beginning of the end
For Emperor Bonaparte!

The PRINCESS OF WALES prepares to leave. An English diplomatist joins the attachés in the alcove. The PRINCESS and her ladies go out.

DIPLOMATIST

I saw you over here, and I came round. Cursed hot and crowded, isn't it!

SECOND ATTACHÉ

What is the Princess leaving so soon for?

DIPLOMATIST

Oh, she has not been received in the Royal box by the other members of the Royal Family, and it has offended her, though she was told beforehand that she could not be. Poor devil! Nobody invited her here. She came unasked, and she has gone unserved.

FIRST ATTACHÉ

We shall have to go unserved likewise, I fancy. The scramble at the buffets is terrible.

DIPLOMATIST

And the road from here to Marsh Gate is impassable. Some ladies have been sitting in their coaches for hours outside the hedge there. We shall not get home till noon to-morrow.

A VOICE (from the back)

Take care of your watches! Pickpockets!

FIRST ATTACHÉ

Good. That relieves the monotony a little.

Excitement in the throng. When it has subsided the band strikes up a country dance, and stewards with white ribbons and laurel leaves are seen bustling about.

SECOND ATTACHÉ

Let us go and look at the dancing. It is "Voulez-vous danser"—no, it is not,—it is "Enrico"—two ladies between two gentlemen.

[They go from the alcove.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

From this phantasmagoria let us roam
To the chief wheel and capstan of the show,
Distant afar. I pray you closely read
What I reveal—wherein each feature bulks
In measure with its value humanly.

The beholder finds himself, as it were, caught up on high, and while the Vauxhall scene still dimly twinkles below, he gazes southward towards Central Europe—the contorted and attenuated écorché of the Continent appearing as in an earlier scene, but now obscure under the summer stars.

Three cities loom out large: Vienna there,
Dresden, which holds Napoléon, over here,

And Leipzig, whither we shall shortly wing,
Out yonderwards. 'Twixt Dresden and Vienna
What thing do you discern?

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Something broad-faced,
Flat-folded, parchment-pale, and in its shape
Rectangular; but moving like a cloud
The Dresden way.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Yet gaze more closely on it.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

The object takes a letter's lineaments
Though swollen to mainsail measure,—magically,
I gather from your words; and on its face
Are three vast seals, red—signifying blood
Must I suppose? It moves on Dresden town,
And dwarfs the city as it passes by.—
You say Napoléon's there?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

The document,
Sized to its big importance, as I told,
Bears in it formal declaration, signed,
Of war by Francis with his late-linked son,
The Emperor of France. Now let us go
To Leipzig city, and await the blow.

A chaotic gloom ensues, accompanied by a rushing like that of a mighty wind.

ACT THIRD

SCENE I

LEIPZIG. NAPOLÉON'S QUARTERS IN THE REUDNITZ SUBURB

The sitting-room of a private mansion. Evening. A large stove-fire and candles burning. The October wind is heard without, and the leaded panes of the old windows shake mournfully.

SEMICHORUS I OF IRONIC SPIRITS (aerial music)

We come; and learn as Time's disordered deaf sands run
That Castlereagh's diplomacy has wiled, waxed, won.
The beacons flash the fevered news to eyes keen bent
That Austria's formal words of war are shaped, sealed, sent.

SEMICHORUS II

So; Poland's three despoilers primed by Bull's gross pay
To stem Napoléon's might, he waits the weird wan day;
His proffered peace declined with scorn, in fell force then
They front him, with yet ten-score thousand more massed men.

At the back of the room CAULAINCOURT, DUKE OF VICENZA, and JOUANNE, one of Napoléon's confidential secretaries, are unpacking and laying out the Emperor's maps and papers. In the foreground BERTHIER, MURAT, LAURISTON, and several officers of Napoléon's suite, are holding a desultory conversation while they await his entry. Their countenances are overcast.

MURAT

At least, the scheme of marching on Berlin
Is now abandoned.

LAURISTON

Not without high words:
He yielded, and gave order prompt for Leipzig,
But coldness and reserve have marked his mood
Towards us ever since.

BERTHIER

The march hereto
He has looked on as a retrogressive one,
And that, he ever holds, is courting woe.
To counsel it was doubtless full of risk,
And heaped us with responsibilities;
—Yet 'twas your missive, sire, that settled it (to Murat).
How stirred he was! "To Leipzig, or Berlin?"
He kept repeating, as he drew and drew
Fantastic figures on the foolscap sheet,—
"The one spells ruin—t'other spells success,
And which is which?"

MURAT (stiffly)

What better could I do?
So far were the Allies from sheering off
As he supposed, that they had moved in march
Full fanfare hither! I was duty-bound
To let him know.

LAURISTON

Assuming victory here,
If he should let the advantage slip him by
As on the Dresden day, he wrecks us all!
'Twas damnable—to ride back from the fight
Inside a coach, as though we had not won!

CAULAINCOURT (from the back)

The Emperor was ill: I have ground for knowing.

NAPOLÉON enters.

NAPOLÉON (buoyantly)

Comrades, the outlook promises us well!

MURAT (dryly)

Right glad are we you tongue such tidings, sire.
To us the stars have visaged differently;
To wit: we muster outside Leipzig here
Levies one hundred and ninety thousand strong.
The enemy has mustered, *outside us*,
Three hundred and fifty thousand—if not more.

NAPOLÉON

All that is needful is to conquer them!
We are concentred here: they lie a-spread,
Which shrinks them to two-hundred-thousand power:—
Though that the urgency of victory
Is absolute, I admit.

MURAT

Yea; otherwise
The issue will be worse than Moscow, sire!

MARMONT, DUKE OF RAGUSA (Wellington's adversary in Spain), is announced, and enters.

NAPOLÉON

Ah, Marmont; bring you in particulars?

MARMONT

Some sappers I have taken captive, sire,
Say the Allies will be at stroke with us
The morning next to-morrow's.—I am come,
Now, from the steeple-top of Liebenthal,
Where I beheld the enemy's fires bespot
The horizon round with raging eyes of flame:—
My vanward posts, too, have been driven in,
And I need succours—thrice ten thousand, say.

NAPOLÉON (coldly)

The enemy vexes not your vanward posts;
You are mistaken.—Now, however, go;
Cross Leipzig, and remain as the reserve.—
Well, gentlemen, my hope herein is this:
The first day to annihilate Schwarzenberg,
The second Blücher. So shall we slip the toils
They are all madding to enmesh us in.

BERTHIER

Few are our infantry to fence with theirs!

NAPOLÉON (cheerfully)

We'll range them in two lines instead of three,
And so we shall look stronger by one-third.

BERTHIER (incredulously)

Can they be thus deceived, sire?

NAPOLÉON

Can they? Yes!
With all my practice I can err in numbers
At least one-quarter; why not they one-third?
Anyhow, 'tis worth trying at a pinch. . . .

AUGEREAU is suddenly announced.

Good! I've not seen him yet since he arrived.

Enter AUGEREAU

Here you are then at last, old Augereau!
You have been looked for long.—But you are no more
The Augereau of Castiglione days! (bitterly).

AUGEREAU

Nay, sire! I still should be the Augereau
Of glorious Castiglione, could you give
The boys of Italy back again to me!

NAPOLÉON

Well, let it drop. . . . Only I notice round me
An atmosphere of scopeless apathy
Wherein I do not share.

AUGEREAU

There are reasons, sire,
Good reasons, for despondence! As I came
I learnt, past question, that Bavaria
Swerves on the very pivot of desertion.
This adds some threescore thousand to our foes.

NAPOLÉON (irritated)

That consummation long has threatened us! . . .
Would that you showed the steeled fidelity
You used to show! Except me, all are slack!
(To Murat) Why, even you yourself, my brother-in-law,
Have been inclining to abandon me!

MURAT (vehemently)

I, sire? It is not so! I stand and swear
The grievous imputation is untrue.
You should know better than believe these things,
And well remember I have enemies
Who ever wait to slander me to you!

NAPOLÉON (more calmly)

Ah yes, yes. That is so.—And yet—and yet
You have deigned to weigh the feasibility
Of treating me as Austria has done! . . .

But I forgive you. You are a worthy man;
You feel real friendship for me. You are brave.
Yet I was wrong to make a king of you.
If I had been content to draw the line
At vice-king, as with young Eugène, no more,
As he has laboured you'd have laboured too!
But as full monarch, you have foraged rather
For your own pot than mine!

MURAT and the marshals are silent, and look at each other with troubled countenances. NAPOLÉON goes to the table at the back, and bends over the charts with CAULAINCOURT, dictating desultory notes to the secretaries.

SPIRIT IRONIC

A seer might say
This savours of a sad Last-Supper talk
'Twixt his disciples and this Christ of war!

Enter an attendant.

ATTENDANT

The Saxon King and Queen and the Princess
Enter the city gates, your Majesty.
They seek the shelter of the civic walls
Against the risk of capture by the Allies.

NAPOLÉON

Ah, so? My friend Augustus, is he near?
I will be prompt to meet him when he comes,
And safely quarter him. (He returns to the map.)

An interval. The clock strikes midnight. The EMPEROR rises abruptly, sighs, and comes forward.

I now retire,
Comrades. Good-night, good-night. Remember well
All must prepare to grip with gory death
In the now voidless battle. It will be
A great one and a critical; one, in brief,
That will seal France's fate, and yours, and mine!

ALL (fervidly)

We'll do our utmost, by the Holy Heaven!

NAPOLÉON

Ah—what was that? (He pulls back the window-curtain.)

SEVERAL

It is our enemies,
Whose southern hosts are signalling to their north.

A white rocket is beheld high in the air. It is followed by a second, and a third. There is a pause, during which NAPOLÉON and the rest wait motionless. In a minute or two, from the opposite side of the city, three coloured rockets are sent up, in evident answer to the three white ones. NAPOLÉON muses, and lets the curtain drop.

NAPOLÉON

Yes; Schwarzenberg to Blücher. . . . It must be
To show that they are ready. So are we!

He goes out without saying more. The marshals and other officers withdraw.

The room darkens, and ends the scene.

SCENE II

THE SAME. THE CITY AND THE BATTLEFIELD

Leipzig is viewed in aerial perspective from a position above the south suburbs, and reveals itself as standing in a plain, with rivers and marshes on the west, north, and south of it, and higher ground to the east and south-east.

At this date it is somewhat in the shape of the letter D, the straight part of which is the river Pleisse. Except as to this side it is surrounded by armies—the inner horseshoe of them being the French defending the city; the outer horseshoe being the Allies about to attack it.

Far over the city—as it were at the top of the D—at Lindenthal, we see MARMONT stationed to meet BLÜCHER when he arrives on that side. To the right of him is NEY, and further off to the right, on heights eastward, MACDONALD. Then round the curve towards the south in order, AUGEREAU, LAURISTON (behind whom is NAPOLÉON himself and the reserve of Guards), VICTOR (at Wachau), and PONIATOWSKI, near the Pleisse River at the bottom of the D. Near him are the cavalry of KELLERMANN and MILHAUD, and in the same direction MURAT with his, covering the great avenues of approach on the south.

Outside all these stands SCHWARZENBERG'S army, of which, opposed to MACDONALD and LAURISTON, are KLENAU'S Austrians and ZIETEN'S Prussians, covered on the flank by Cossacks under PLATOFF. Opposed to VICTOR and PONIATOWSKI are MEERFELDT and HESSE-HOMBURG'S Austrians, WITTGENSTEIN'S Russians, KLEIST'S Prussians, GUILAY'S Austrians, with LICHTENSTEIN'S and THIELMANN'S light troops: thus reaching round across the Elster into the morass on our near left—the lower point of the D.

SEMICHORUS I OF RUMOURS (aerial music)

This is the combat of Napoléon's hope,
But not of his assurance! Shrunk in power
He broods beneath October's clammy cope,
While hemming hordes wax denser every hour.

SEMICHORUS II

He knows, he knows that though in equal fight
He stands as heretofore the matched of none,
A feeble skill is propped by numbers' might,
And now three hosts close round to crush out one!

DUMB SHOW

The Leipzig clocks imperturbably strike nine, and the battle which is to decide the fate of Europe, and perhaps the world, begins with three booms from the line of the Allies. They are the signal for a general cannonade of devastating intensity.

So massive is the contest that we soon fail to individualize the combatants as beings, and can only observe them as amorphous drifts, clouds, and waves of conscious atoms, surging and rolling together; can only particularize them by race, tribe, and language. Nationalities from the uttermost parts of Asia here meet those from the Atlantic edge of Europe for the first and last time. By noon

the sound becomes a loud droning, uninterrupted and breve-like, as from the pedal of an organ kept continuously down.

Chorus of Rumours

Now triple battle beats about the town,
And now contracts the huge elastic ring
Of fighting flesh, as those within go down,
Or spreads, as those without show faltering!

It becomes apparent that the French have a particular intention, the Allies only a general one. That of the French is to break through the enemy's centre and surround his right. To this end Napoléon launches fresh columns, and simultaneously Oudinot supports Victor against Eugène of Würtemberg's right, while on the other side of him the cavalry of Milhaud and Kellermann prepares to charge. Napoléon's combination is successful, and drives back Eugène. Meanwhile Schwarzenberg is stuck fast, useless, in the marshes between the Pleisse and the Elster.

By three o'clock the Allied centre, which has held out against the assaults of the French right and left, is broken through by the cavalry under Murat, Latour-Maubourg, and Kellermann.

The bells of Leipzig ring.

Chorus of the Pities

Those chimings, ill-advised and premature!
Who knows if such vast valour will endure?

The Austro-Russians are withdrawn from the marshes by Schwarzenberg. But the French cavalry also get entangled in the swamps, and simultaneously Marmont is beaten at Möckern.

Meanwhile Ney, to the north of Leipzig, having heard the battle raging southward, leaves his position to assist in it. He has nearly arrived when he hears Blücher attacking at the point he came from, and sends back some of his divisions.

Bertrand has kept open the west road to Lindenau and the Rhine, the only French line of retreat.

Evening finds the battle a drawn one. With the nightfall three blank shots reverberate hollowly.

Semichorus I of Rumours

They sound to say that, for this moaning night,
As Nature sleeps, so too shall sleep the fight;
Neither the victor.

SEMICHORUS II

But, for France and him,
Half-won is losing!

CHORUS

Yea, his hopes drop dim,
Since nothing less than victory to-day
Had saved a cause whose ruin is delay!

The night gets thicker and no more is seen.

SCENE III

THE SAME, FROM THE TOWER OF THE PLEISSENBURG

The tower commands a view of great part of the battlefield. Day has just dawned, and citizens, saucer-eyed from anxiety and sleeplessness, are discovered gazing.

FIRST CITIZEN

The wind waxed wild at midnight while I watched,
With flapping showers, and clouds that mopped the moon,
Till dawn began outheaving this huge day,
Pallidly—as if scared by its own child;
This day that the Allies with bonded might
Have vowed to deal their felling finite blow.

SECOND CITIZEN

So must it be! They have welded close the coop
Wherein our luckless Frenchmen are enjailed
With such compression that their front has shrunk
From five miles' farness to but half as far.—
Men say Napoléon made resolve last night
To marshal a retreat. If so, his way
Is by the Bridge of Lindenau alone.

They look across in the cold east light at the long straight causeway from the Ranstädt Gate at the north-west corner of the town, and the Lindenau bridge over the Elster beyond.

FIRST CITIZEN

Last night I saw, like wolf-packs, hosts appear
Upon the Dresden road; and then, anon,
The already stout arrays of Schwarzenberg
Grew stoutened more. I witnessed clearly, too,
Just before dark, the bands of Bernadotte
Come, hemming in the north more thoroughly.
The horizon glowered with a thousand fires
As the unyielding circle shut around.

As it grows lighter they scan and define the armies.

THIRD CITIZEN

Those lying there, 'twixt Connewitz and Dölitz,
Are the right wing of horse Murat commands.
Next, Poniatowski, Victor, and the rest.
Out here, Napoléon's centre at Probstheida,
Where he has bivouacked. Those round this way
Are his left wing with Ney, that face the north
Between Paunsdorf and Gohlis.—Thus, you see
They are skilfully sconced within the villages,
With cannon ranged in front. And every copse,
Dingle, and grove is packed with riflemen.

The heavy sky begins to clear with the full arrival of the morning. The sun bursts out, and the previously dark and gloomy masses glitter in the rays. It is now seven o'clock, and with the shining of the sun the battle is resumed.

The army of Bohemia to the south and east, in three great columns, marches concentrically upon NAPOLÉON'S new and much-contracted line — the first column of thirty-five thousand under BENNIGSEN; the second, the central, forty-five thousand under BARCLAY DE TOLLY; the third, twenty-five thousand under the PRINCE OF HESSE-HOMBURG.

An interval of suspense.

FIRST CITIZEN

Ah, see! The French bend, falter, and fall back.

Another interval. Then a huge rumble of artillery resounds from the north.

SEMICHORUS I OF RUMOURS (aerial music)

Now Blücher has arrived; and now falls to!
Marmont withdraws before him. Bernadotte
Touching Bennigsen, joins attack with him,
And Ney must needs recede. This serves as sign
To Schwarzenberg to bear upon Probstheida—
Napoléon's keystone and dependence here.
But for long whiles he fails to win his will,
The chief himself being nigh—outmatching might with skill.

SEMICHORUS II

Ney meanwhile, stung still sharplier, still withdraws
Nearer the town and, met by new mischance,
Finds him forsaken by his Saxon wing—
Fair files of thrice twelve thousand footmanry.
But rallying those still true with signs and calls,
He warely closes up his remnant to the walls.

SEMICHORUS I

Around Probstheida still the conflict rolls
Under Napoléon's eye surpassingly.
Like sedge before the scythe the sections fall
And bayonets slant and reek. Each cannon-blaze
Makes the air thick with human limbs; while keen
Contests rage hand to hand. Throats shout "advance,"
And forms walm, wallow, and slack suddenly.
Hot ordnance split and shiver and rebound,
And firelocks fouled and flintless overstrew the ground.

SEMICHORUS II

At length the Allies, daring tumultuously,
Find them inside Probstheida. There is fixed
Napoléon's cardinal and centre hold.
But need to loose it grows his gloomy fear
As night begins to brown and treacherous mists appear.

CHORUS

Then, on the three fronts of this reaching field,
A furious, far, and final cannonade
Burns from two thousand mouths and shakes the plain,
And hastens the sure end! Towards the west
Bertrand keeps open the retreating-way,
Along which wambling waggons since the noon
Have crept in closening file. Dusk falls full soon;
The marching remnants drowse amid their talk,
And worn and harrowed horses slumber as they walk.

In the darkness of the distance spread cries from the maimed animals and the wounded men. Multitudes of the latter contrive to crawl into the city, until the streets are full of them. Their voices are heard calling.

SECOND CITIZEN

They cry for water! Let us now go down,
And do what mercy may.

[Exeunt citizens from the tower.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

A fire is lit
Near to the Thonberg wind-wheel. Can it be
Napoléon tarries yet? Let us go see.

The distant firelight becomes clearer and closer.

SCENE IV

THE SAME. AT THE THONBERG WINDMILL

By the newly lighted fire NAPOLÉON is seen walking up and down, much agitated and worn. With him are MURAT, BERTHIER, AUGEREAU, VICTOR, and other marshals of corps that have been engaged in this part of the field—all perspiring, muddy, and fatigued.

NAPOLÉON

Baseness so gross I had not guessed of them!—
The thirty thousand false Bavarians
I looked on losing not unplacidly;
But these troth-swearing sober Saxonry
I reckoned staunch, and standers by their king!
Thirty-five thousand gone! It magnifies
A failure into a catastrophe. . . .
Murat, we must recede precipitately,
And not as hope had dreamed! Begin it then
This very hour.—Berthier, write out the orders.—
Let me sit down.

A chair is brought out from the mill. NAPOLÉON sinks into it, and BERTHIER, stooping over the fire, begins writing to the Emperor's dictation, the marshals looking with gloomy faces at the flaming logs.

NAPOLÉON has hardly dictated a line when he stops short. BERTHIER turns round and finds that he has dropt asleep.

MURAT (sullenly)

Far better not disturb him;
He'll soon enough awake!

They wait, muttering to one another in tones expressing weary indifference to issues. NAPOLÉON sleeps heavily for a quarter of an hour, during which the moon rises over the field. At the end he starts up and stares around him with astonishment.

NAPOLÉON

Am I awake,
Or is this all a dream?—Ah, no. Too real! . . .
And yet I have seen ere now a time like this.

The dictation is resumed. While it is in progress there can be heard between the words of NAPOLÉON the persistent cries from the plain, rising and falling like those of a vast rookery far away, intermingled with the trampling of hoofs and the rumble of wheels. The bivouac fires of the engirdling enemy glow all around except for a small segment to the west—the track of retreat, still kept open by BERTRAND, and already taken by the baggage-waggons.

The orders for its adoption by the entire army being completed, NAPOLÉON bids adieu to his marshals, and rides with BERTHIER and CAULAINCOURT into Leipzig. Exeunt also the others.

SEMICHORUS I OF PITIES

Now, as in the dream of one sick to death,
There comes a narrowing room
That pens him, body and limbs and breath,
To wait a hideous doom,

SEMICHORUS II

So to Napoléon in the hush
That holds the town and towers
Through this dire night, a creeping crush
Seems cincturing his powers.

The scene closes under a rimy mist, which makes a lurid cloud of the firelights.

SCENE V

THE SAME. A STREET NEAR THE RANSTÄDT GATE

High old-fashioned houses form the street, along which, from the east of the city, is streaming a confusion of waggons, artillery, chariots, horsemen, foot-soldiers, camp-followers, and wounded, in hurried exit through the gate westward upon the highroad to Lindenau, Lützen, and the Rhine.

In front of an inn called the "Prussian Arms" are some attendants of NAPOLÉON waiting with horses.

FIRST OFFICER

He has just come from bidding the king and queen
A long good-bye. . . . Is it that they will pay
For his indulgence of their past ambition
By sharing now his ruin? Much the king
Did beg of him to leave them to their lot,
And shun the shame of capture needlessly.

(He looks anxiously towards the door.)

I would he'd haste! Each minute is of price.

SECOND OFFICER

The king will come to terms with the Allies.
They will not hurt him. Though he has lost his all,
His case is not like ours!

The cheers of the approaching enemy grow louder. NAPOLÉON comes out from the "Prussian Arms," haggard, unshaven, and in disordered attire. He is about to mount, but, perceiving the blocked state of the street, he hesitates.

NAPOLÉON

God, what a crowd!
I shall more fleetly gain the gate afoot.
There is a byway somewhere, I suppose?

A citizen approaches out of the inn.

CITIZEN

This alley, sire, will speed you to the gate;
I shall be honoured much to point the way.

NAPOLÉON

Then do, good friend. (To attendants) Bring on the horses there;
If I arrive soonest I will wait for you.

The citizen shows NAPOLÉON the way into the alley.

CITIZEN

A garden's at the end, your Majesty,
Through which you pass. Beyond there is a door
That opens to the Elster bank unbalked.

NAPOLÉON disappears into the alley. His attendants plunge amid the traffic with the horses, and thread their way down the street.

Another citizen comes from the door of the inn and greets the first.

FIRST CITIZEN

He's gone!

SECOND CITIZEN

I'll see if he succeed.

He re-enters the inn and soon appears at an upper window.

FIRST CITIZEN (from below)

You see him?

SECOND CITIZEN (gazing)

He is already at the garden-end;
Now he has passed out to the river-brim,
And plods along it towards the Ranstädt Gate. . . .
He finds no horse to meet him! . . . And the throng
Thrusts him about, none recognizing him.
Ah—now the horses reach there; and he mounts,
And hurries through the arch. . . . Again I see him—
Now he's upon the causeway in the marsh;
Now rides across the bridge of Lindenau. . . .
And now, among the troops that choke the road
I lose all sight of him.

A third citizen enters from the direction NAPOLÉON has taken.

THIRD CITIZEN (breathlessly)

I have seen him go!
And while he passed the gate I stood i' the crowd

So close I could have touched him! Few discerned
In one so soiled the erst Arch-Emperor!—
In the lax mood of him who has lost all
He stood inert there, idly singing thin:
"Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre!" until his suite
Came up with horses.

SECOND CITIZEN (still gazing afar)

Poniatowski's Poles
Wearily walk the level causeway now;
Also, meseems, Macdonald's corps and Reynier's.
The frail-framed, new-built bridge has broken down:
They've but the old to cross by.

FIRST CITIZEN

Feeble foresight!
They should have had a dozen.

SECOND CITIZEN

All the corps—
Macdonald's, Poniatowski's, Reynier's—all—
Confusedly block the entrance to the bridge.
And—verily Blücher's troops are through the town,
And are debouching from the Ranstädt Gate
Upon the Frenchmen's rear!

A thunderous report stops his words, echoing through the city from the direction in which he is gazing, and rattling all the windows. A hoarse chorus of cries becomes audible immediately after.

FIRST, THIRD, ETC., CITIZENS

Ach, Heaven!—what's that?

SECOND CITIZEN

The bridge of Lindenau has been upblown!

SEMICHORUS I OF PITIES (aerial music)

There leaps to the sky an earthen wave,
And stones, and men, as though
Some rebel churchyard crew updrave
Their sepulchres from below.

SEMICHORUS II

To Heaven is blown Bridge Lindenau;
Wrecked regiments reel therefrom;
And rank and file in masses plough
The sullen Elster-Strom.

SEMICHORUS I

A gulf is Lindenau; and dead
Are fifties, hundreds, tens;
And every current ripples red
With marshals' blood and men's.

SEMICHORUS II

The smart Macdonald swims therein,
And barely wins the verge;
Bold Poniatowski plunges in
Never to re-emerge!

FIRST CITIZEN

Are not the French across as yet, God save them?

SECOND CITIZEN (still gazing above)

Nor Reynier's corps, Macdonald's, Lauriston's,
Nor yet the Poles. . . . And Blücher's troops approach,
And all the French this side are prisoners.
—Now for our handling by the Prussian host;
Scant courtesy for our King!

Other citizens appear beside him at the window, and further conversation continues entirely above.

CHORUS OF IRONIC SPIRITS

The Battle of the Nations now is closing,
And all is lost to One, to many gained;
The old dynastic routine reimposing,
The new dynastic structure unsustained.

Now every neighbouring realm is France's warder,
And smirking satisfaction will be feigned:
The which is seemlier?—so-called ancient order,
Or that the hot-breath'd war-horse ramp unreined?

The October night thickens and curtains the scene.

SCENE VI

THE PYRENEES. NEAR THE RIVER NIVELLE

Evening. The dining-room of WELLINGTON's quarters. The table is laid for dinner. The battle of the Nivelle has just been fought.

Enter WELLINGTON, HILL, BERESFORD, STEWART, HOPE, CLINTON, COLBORNE, COLE, KEMPT (with a bound-up wound), and other officers.

WELLINGTON

It is strange that they did not hold their grand position more tenaciously against us to-day. By God, I don't quite see why we should have beaten them!

COLBORNE

My impression is that they had the stiffness taken out of them by something they had just heard of. Anyhow, startling news of some kind was received by

those of the Eighty-eighth we took in the signal-redoubt after I summoned the Commandant.

WELLINGTON

Oh, what news?

COLBORNE

I cannot say, my lord. I only know that the latest number of the *Imperial Gazette* was seen in the hands of some of them before the capture. They had been reading the contents, and were cast down.

WELLINGTON

That's interesting. I wonder what the news could have been?

HILL

Something about Boney's army in Saxony would be most probable. Though I question if there's time yet for much to have been decided there.

BERESFORD

Well, I wouldn't say that. A hell of a lot of things may have happened there by this time.

COLBORNE

It was tantalizing, but they were just able to destroy the paper before we could prevent them.

WELLINGTON

Did you question them?

COLBORNE

Oh yes. But they stayed sulking at being taken, and would tell us nothing, pretending that they knew

nothing. Whether much were going on, they said, or little, between the army of the Emperor and the army of the Allies, it was none of their business to relate it; so they kept a gloomy silence for the most part.

WELLINGTON

They will cheer up a bit and be more communicative when they have had some dinner

COLE

They are dining here, my lord?

WELLINGTON

I sent them an invitation an hour ago, which they have accepted. I could do no less, poor devils. They'll be here in a few minutes. See that they have plenty of Madeira to whet their whistles with. It will screw them up into a better key, and they'll not be so reserved.

The conversation on the day's battle becomes general. Enter as guests French officers of the Eighty-eighth regiment now prisoners on parole. They are welcomed by WELLINGTON and the staff, and all sit down to dinner.

For some time the meal proceeds almost in silence; but wine is passed freely, and both French and English officers become talkative and merry.

WELLINGTON (to the French Commandant)

More cozy this, sir, than—I'll warrant me—
You found it in that damned redoubt to-day?

COMMANDANT

The devil if 'tis not, monseigneur, sure!

WELLINGTON

So 'tis for us who were outside, by God!

COMMANDANT (gloomily)

No; we were not at ease! Alas, my lord,
'Twas more than flesh and blood could do, to fight
After such paralyzing tidings came.
More life may trickle out of men through thought
Than through a gaping wound.

WELLINGTON

Your reference
Bears on the news from Saxony, I infer?

SECOND FRENCH OFFICER

Yes: on the Emperor's ruinous defeat
At Leipzig city—brought to our startled heed
By one of the *Gazettes* just now arrived.

All the English officers stop speaking, and listen eagerly.

WELLINGTON

Where are the Emperor's headquarters now?

COMMANDANT

My lord, there are no headquarters.

WELLINGTON

No headquarters?

COMMANDANT

There are no French headquarters now, my lord,
For there is no French army! France's fame
Is fouled. And how, then, could we fight to-day
With our hearts in our shoes!

WELLINGTON

Why, that bears out
What I but lately said; it was not like
The brave men who have faced and foiled me here
So many a long year past, to give away
A stubborn station quite so readily.

BERESFORD

And what, messieurs, ensued at Leipzig then?

SEVERAL FRENCH OFFICERS

Why, sirs, should we conceal it? Thereupon
Part of our army took the Lützen road;
But twenty thousand of our rear were ginned
Behind a blown-up bridge. Those in advance
Arrived at Lützen with the Emperor—
The scene of our once valiant victory!
In such sad sort retreat was hurried on,
Erfurt was gained with Blücher hot at heel.
To cross the Rhine seemed then our only hope;
Alas, the Austrians and the Bavarians
Faced us in Hanau Forest, led by Wrede,
And dead-blocked our escape.

WELLINGTON

Ha. Did they though!

SECOND FRENCH OFFICER

But if brave hearts were ever desperate,
Sir, we were desperate then! We pierced them through,
Our loss unrecking. So by Frankfurt's walls
We fared to Mainz, and there recrossed the Rhine.
A funeral procession, so we seemed,

Upon the long bridge that had rung so oft
To our victorious feet! . . . What since has coursed
We know not, gentlemen. But this we know,
That Germany echoes no French footfall now!

AN ENGLISH OFFICER

One sees not why it should.

SECOND FRENCH OFFICER

We'll leave it so.

Conversation on the Leipzig disaster continues till the dinner ends. The French prisoners courteously take their leave and go out.

WELLINGTON

Very good set of fellows. I could wish
They all were mine! . . . Well, well; there was no crime
In trying to ascertain these fat events:
They would have sounded soon from other tongues.

HILL

It looks like the first scene of act the last
For our and all men's foe!

WELLINGTON

I count to meet
The Allies upon the cobble-stones of Paris
Before another half-year's suns have shone.
—But there's some work for us to do here yet:
The dawn must find us fording the Nivelle!

Exeunt WELLINGTON and officers.

The room darkens.

ACT FOURTH

SCENE I

THE UPPER RHINE

The view is from a vague altitude over the beautiful country traversed by the Upper Rhine, which stretches through it in bird's-eye perspective. At this date in Europe's history the stream forms the frontier between France and Germany.

It is the morning of New Year's Day, and the shine of the tardy sun reaches the fronts of the beetling castles, but scarcely descends far enough to touch the wavelets of the river winding leftwards across the many-leagued picture from Schaffhausen to Coblenz.

DUMB SHOW

At first nothing—not even the river itself—seems to move in the panorama. But anon certain strange dark patches in the landscape, flexuous and riband-shaped, are discerned to be moving slowly. Only one movable object on earth is large enough to be conspicuous herefrom, and that is an army. The moving shapes are armies.

The nearest, almost beneath us, is defiling across the river by a bridge of boats, near the junction of the Rhine and the Neckar, where the oval town of Mannheim, standing in the fork between the two rivers, has from here the look of a human head in a cleft stick. Martial music from many bands strikes up as the crossing is effected, and the undulating columns twinkle as if they were scaly serpents.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

It is the Russian host, invading France!

Many miles to the left, down-stream, near the little town of Caube, another army is seen to be simultaneously crossing the pale current, its arms and accoutrements twinkling in like manner.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

Thither the Prussian levies, too, advance!

Turning now to the right, far away by Basel (beyond which the Swiss mountains close the scene), a still larger train of war-geared humanity, two hundred thousand strong, is discernible. It has already crossed the water, which is much narrower here, and has advanced several miles westward, where its ductile mass of greyness and glitter is beheld parting into six columns, that march on in flexuous courses of varying direction.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

There glides carked Austria's invading force!—
Panting, too, Paris-wards with foot and horse,
Of one intention with the other twain,
And Wellington, from the south, in upper Spain.

All these dark and grey columns, converging westward by sure degrees, advance without opposition. They glide on as if by gravitation, in fluid figures, dictated by the conformation of the country, like water from a burst reservoir; mostly snake-shaped, but occasionally with batrachian and saurian outlines. In spite of the immensity of this human mechanism on its surface, the winter landscape wears an impassive look, as if nothing were happening.

Evening closes in, and the Dumb Show is obscured.

SCENE II

PARIS. THE TUILERIES

It is Sunday just after mass, and the principal officers of the National Guard are assembled in the Salle des Maréchaux. They stand in an attitude of suspense, some with the print of sadness on their faces, some with that of perplexity.

The door leading from the Hall to the adjoining chapel is thrown open. There enter from the chapel with the last notes of the service the EMPEROR NAPOLÉON and the EMPRESS; and simultaneously from a door opposite MADAME DE MONTESQUIOU, the governess, who carries in her arms the KING OF ROME, now a fair child between two and three. He is clothed in a miniature uniform of the Guards themselves.

MADAME DE MONTESQUIOU brings forward the child and sets him on his feet near his mother. NAPOLÉON, with a mournful smile, giving one hand to the boy and the other to MARIE LOUISE, *en famille*, leads them forward. The Guard bursts into cheers.

NAPOLÉON

Gentlemen of the National Guard and friends,
I have to leave you; and before I fare
To Heaven knows what of personal destiny,
I give into your loyal guardianship
Those dearest in the world to me; my wife,
The Empress, and my son the King of Rome.—
I go to shield your roofs and kin from foes
Who have dared to pierce the fences of your land;
And knowing that you house those dears of mine,
I start afar in all tranquillity,
Stayed by my trust in your fast faithfulness.

(Enthusiastic cheers from the Guard.)

OFFICERS (with emotion)

We proudly swear to justify the trust!
And never will we see another sit
Than you, or yours, on the great throne of France.

NAPOLÉON

I ratify the Empress' regency,
And re-confirm it on the last year's lines,
My brother Joseph stoutening her rule
As the Lieutenant-General of the State.—
Vex her with no divisions; let regard
For property, for order, and for France
Be chief with all. Know, gentlemen, the Allies
Are drunken with success. Their late advantage
They have handled wholly for their own gross gain,
And made a pastime of my agony.
That I go clogged with cares I sadly own;
Yet I go primed with hope; ay, in despite
Of a last sorrow that has sunk upon me,—
The grief of hearing, good and constant friends,
That my own sister's consort, Naples' king,
Blazons himself a backer of the Allies,

And marches with a Neapolitan force
Against our puissance under Prince Eugène.
The varied operations to ensue
May bring the enemy largely Paris-wards;
But suffer no alarm; before long days
I will annihilate by flank and rear
Those who have risen to trample on our soil;
And as I have done so many and proud a time,
Come back to you with ringing victory!—
Now, see: I personally present to you
My son and my successor ere I go.

He takes the child in his arms and carries him round to the officers severally. They are much affected and raise loud cheers.

You stand by him and her? You swear as much?

OFFICERS

We swear!

NAPOLÉON

This you repeat—you promise it?

OFFICERS

We promise. May the dynasty live for ever!

Their shouts, which spread to the Carrousel without, are echoed by the soldiers of the Guard assembled there. The EMPRESS is now in tears, and the EMPEROR supports her.

MARIE LOUISE

Such whole enthusiasm I have never known!—
Not even from the Landwehr of Vienna.

Amid repeated protestations and farewells NAPOLÉON, the EMPRESS, the KING OF ROME, MADAME DE MONTESQUIOU, etc., go out in one direction, and the officers of the National Guard in another.

The curtain falls for an interval.

When it rises again the apartment is in darkness, and its atmosphere chilly. The January night-wind howls without. Two servants enter hastily, and light candles and a fire. The hands of the clock are pointing to three.

The room is hardly in order when the EMPEROR enters, equipped for the intended journey; and with him, his left arm being round her waist, walks MARIE LOUISE in a dressing-gown. On his right arm he carries the KING OF ROME and in his hand a bundle of papers. COUNT BERTRAND and a few members of the household follow.

Reaching the middle of the room, he kisses the child and embraces the EMPRESS, who is tearful, the child weeping likewise. NAPOLÉON takes the papers to the fire, thrusts them in, and watches them consume; then burns other bundles brought by his attendants.

NAPOLÉON (gloomily)

Better to treat them thus; since no one knows
What comes, or into whose hands he may fall!

MARIE LOUISE

I have an apprehension—unexplained—
That I shall never see you any more!

NAPOLÉON

Dismiss such fears. You may as well as not.
As things are doomed to be they will be, dear.
If shadows must come, let them come as though
The sun were due and you were trusting to it:
'Twill teach the world it wrongs in bringing them.

They embrace finally. Exeunt NAPOLÉON, etc. Afterwards MARIE LOUISE and the child.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Her instinct forwardly is keen in cast,
And yet how limited. True it may be
They never more will meet; although—to use
The bounded prophecy I am dowered with—
The screen that will maintain their severance
Would pass her own believing; proving it
No gaol-grille, no scath of scorching war,
But thin persuasion, pressing on her pulse
To breed aloofness and a mind averse;

Until his image in her soul will shape
Dwarfed as a far Colossus on a plain,
Or figure-head that smalls upon the main.

The lights are extinguished and the hall is left in darkness.

SCENE III

THE SAME. THE APARTMENTS OF THE EMPRESS

A March morning, verging on seven o'clock, throws its cheerless stare into the private drawing-room of MARIE LOUISE, animating the gilt furniture to only a feeble shine. Two chamberlains of the palace are there in waiting. They look from the windows and yawn.

FIRST CHAMBERLAIN

Here's a watering for spring hopes! Who would have supposed when the Emperor left, and appointed her Regent, that she and the Regency too would have to scurry after in so short a time!

SECOND CHAMBERLAIN

Was a course decided on last night?

FIRST CHAMBERLAIN

Yes. The Privy Council sat till long past midnight, debating the burning question whether she and the child should remain or not. Some were one way, some the other. She settled the matter by saying she would go.

SECOND CHAMBERLAIN

I thought it might come to that. I heard the alarm beating all night to assemble the National Guard; and I am told that some volunteers have

marched out to support Marmont. But they are a mere handful: what can they do?

A clatter of wheels and a champing and prancing of horses is heard outside the palace. MENÉVAL enters, and divers officers of the household; then from her bedroom at the other end MARIE LOUISE, in a travelling dress and hat, leading the KING OF ROME, attired for travel likewise. She looks distracted and pale. Next come the DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO, lady of honour, the COUNTESS DE LUÇAY, MADAME DE CASTIGLIONE, MADAME DE MONTESQUIOU, ladies of the palace, and others, all in travelling trim.

KING OF ROME (plaintively)

Why are we doing these strange things, mamma,
And what did we get up so early for?

MARIE LOUISE

I cannot, dear, explain. So many events
Enlarge and make so many hours of one,
That it would be too hard to tell them now.

KING OF ROME

But you know why we are setting out like this?
Is it because we fear our enemies?

MARIE LOUISE

We are not sure that we are going yet.
It may be needful; but don't ask me here.
Some time I'll tell you.

She sits down irresolutely, and bestows recognitions on the assembled officials with a preoccupied air.

KING OF ROME (in a murmur)

I like being here best;
And I don't want to go I know not where!

MARIE LOUISE

Run, dear, to Mamma 'Quiou and talk to her.

(He goes across to MADAME DE MONTESQUIOU.)

I hear that women of the Royalist hope

(to the DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO)

Have bent them busy in their private rooms
With working white cockades these several days.—
Yes—I must go!

DUCHESS OF MONTEBELLO

But why yet, Empress dear?
We may soon gain good news; some messenger
Hie from the Emperor or King Joseph hither?

MARIE LOUISE

King Joseph I await. He's gone to eye
The outposts, with the Ministers of War,
To learn the scope and nearness of the Allies;
He should almost be back.

A silence, till approaching feet are suddenly heard outside the door.

Ah, here he comes;
Now we shall know!

Enter precipitately not Joseph but officers of the National Guard and others.

OFFICERS

Long live the Empress-regent!
Do not quit Paris, pray, your Majesty.
Remain, remain. We plight us to defend you!

MARIE LOUISE (agitated)

Gallant messieurs, I thank you heartily.
But by the Emperor's biddance I am bound.

He has vowed he'd liefer see me and my son
Blanched at the bottom of the smothering Seine
Than in the talons of the foes of France.—
To keep us sure from such, then, he ordained
Our swift withdrawal with the Ministers
Towards the Loire, if enemies advanced
In overmastering might. They do advance;
Marshals Marmont and Mortier are repulsed,
And that has come whose hazard he foresaw.
All is arranged; the treasure is awheel,
And papers, seals, and cyphers packed therewith.

OFFICERS (dubiously)

Yet to leave Paris is to court disaster!

MARIE LOUISE (with petulance)

I shall do what I say! . . . I don't know what—
What *shall* I do!

She bursts into tears and rushes into her bedroom, followed by the young KING and some of her ladies. There is a painful silence, broken by sobbings and expostulations within. Re-enter one of the ladies.

LADY

She's sorely overthrown;
She flings herself upon the bed distraught.
She says, "My God, let them make up their minds
To one or other of these harrowing ills,
And force me to't, and end my agony!"

An official enters at the main door.

OFFICIAL

I am sent here by the Minister of War
To her Imperial Majesty the Empress.

Re-enter MARIE LOUISE and the KING OF ROME.

Your Majesty, my mission is to say
Imperious need dictates your instant flight.

A vanward regiment of the Prussian packs
Has gained the shadow of the city walls.

MENÉVAL

They are armed Europe's scouts!

Enter CAMBACÉRÈS the Arch-Chancellor, COUNT BEAUHARNAIS, CORVISART the physician, DE BAUSSET, DE CANISY the equerry, and others.

CAMBACÉRÈS

Your Majesty,
There's not a trice to lose. The force well-nigh
Of all compacted Europe crowds on us,
And clamours at the walls!

BEAUHARNAIS

If you stay longer,
You stay to fall into the Cossacks' hands.
The people, too, are waxing masterful:
They think the lingering of your Majesty
Makes Paris more a peril for themselves
Than a defence for you. To fight is fruitless,
And wanton waste of life. You have nought to do
But go; and I, and all the Councillors,
Will follow you.

MARIE LOUISE

Then I was right to say
That I would go! Now go I surely will,
And let none try to hinder me again!

[She prepares to leave.

KING OF ROME (crying)

I will not go! I like to live here best!
Don't go to Rambouillet, mamma; please don't.
It is a nasty place! Let us stay here.
O Mamma 'Quiou, stay with me here; pray stay!

MARIE LOUISE (to the Equerry)

Bring him down.

Exit MARIE LOUISE in tears, followed by ladies-in-waiting and others.

DE CANISY

Come now, Monseigneur, come.

He catches up the boy in his arms and prepares to follow the Empress.

KING OF ROME (kicking)

No, no, no! I don't want to go away from my house—I don't want to! Now papa is away I am the master! (He clings to the door as the equerry is bearing him through it.)

DE CANISY

But you must go.

The child's fingers are pulled away. Exit DE CANISY with the KING OF ROME, who is heard screaming as he is carried down the staircase.

MADAME DE MONTESQUIOU

I feel the child is right!
A premonition has enlightened him.
She ought to stay. But, ah, the die is cast!

MADAME DE MONTESQUIOU and the remainder of the party follow, and the room is left empty.

Enter servants hastily.

FIRST SERVANT

Sacred God, where are we to go to for grub and good lying to-night? What are ill-used men to do?

SECOND SERVANT

I trudge like the rest. All the true philosophers are gone, and the middling true are going. I made up

my mind like the truest that ever was as soon as I heard the general alarm beat.

THIRD SERVANT

I stay here. No Allies are going to tickle our skins. The storm which roots—Dost know what a metaphor is, comrade? I brim with them at this historic time!

SECOND SERVANT

A weapon of war used by the Cossacks?

THIRD SERVANT

Your imagination will be your ruin some day, my man! It happens to be a weapon of wisdom used by me. My metaphor is one may'st have met with on the rare times when th'hast been in good society. Here it is: The storm which roots the pine spares the p—s—b—d. Now do ye see?

FIRST AND SECOND SERVANTS

Good! Your teaching, friend, is as sound as true religion! We'll not go. Hearken to what's doing outside. (Carriages are heard moving. Servants go to the window and look down.) Lord, there's the Duchess getting in. Now the Mistress of the Wardrobe; now the Ladies of the Palace; now the Prefects; now the Doctors. What a time it takes! There are near a dozen berlines, as I am a patriot! Those other carriages bear treasure. How quiet the people are! It is like a funeral procession. Not a tongue cheers her!

THIRD SERVANT

Now there will be a nice convenient time for a little good victuals and drink, and likewise pickings, before the Allies arrive, thank Mother Molly!

From a distant part of the city bands are heard playing military marches. Guns next resound. Another servant rushes in.

FOURTH SERVANT

Montmartre is being stormed, and bombs are falling in the Chaussée d'Antin!

[Exit fourth servant.

THIRD SERVANT (pulling something from his pocket)

Then it is time for me to gird my armour on.

SECOND SERVANT

What hast there?

Third servant holds up a crumpled white cockade and sticks it in his hair. The firing gets louder.

FIRST AND SECOND SERVANTS

Hast got another?

THIRD SERVANT (pulling out more)

Ay—here they are; at a price.

The others purchase cockades of third servant. A military march is again heard. Re-enter fourth servant.

FOURTH SERVANT

The city has capitulated! The Allied sovereigns, so it is said, will enter in grand procession to-morrow: the Prussian cavalry first, then the Austrian foot, then the Russian and Prussian foot, then the Russian horse and artillery. And to cap all, the people of Paris are glad of the change. They have put a rope round the neck of the statue of Napoléon on the column of the Grand Army, and are amusing themselves with twitching it and crying "Strangle the tyrant!"

SECOND SERVANT

Well, well! There's rich colours in this kaleidoscopic world!

THIRD SERVANT

And there's comedy in all things—when they don't concern you. Another glorious time among the many we've had since eighty-nine. We have put our armour on none too soon. The Bourbons for ever!

[He leaves, followed by first and second servants.

FOURTH SERVANT

My faith, I think I'll turn Englishman in my older years, where there's not these trying changes in the Constitution!

[Follows the others.

The Allies' military march waxes louder as the scene shuts.

SCENE IV

FONTAINEBLEAU. A ROOM IN THE PALACE

NAPOLÉON is discovered walking impatiently up and down, and glancing at the clock every few minutes.

Enter NEY.

NAPOLÉON (without a greeting)

Well—the result? Ah, but your looks display
A leaden dawning to the light you bring!
What—not a regency? What—not the Empress
To hold it in trusteeship for my son?

NEY

Sire, things like revolutions turn not back,
But go straight on. Imperial governance
Is coffined for your family and yourself!
It is declared that military repose,
And France's well-doing, demand of you
Your abdication—unconditioned, sheer.
This verdict of the sovereigns cannot change,
And I have pushed on hot to let you know.

NAPOLÉON (with repression)

I am obliged to you. You have told me promptly!—
This was to be expected. I had learnt
Of Marmont's late defection, and the Sixth's;
The consequence I easily inferred.

NEY

The Paris folk are flaked with white cockades;
Tricolors choke the kennels. Rapturously
They clamour for the Bourbons and for peace.

(NAPOLÉON coldly)

I could give Paris peace as well as they!

NEY (dubiously)

Well, sire, you did not. And I should assume
They have judged the future by the accustomed past.

NAPOLÉON (tartly)

I can draw inferences without assistance!

NEY (persisting)

They see the brooks of blood that have flowed forth;
They feel their own bereavements; so their mood
Asked no deep reasoning for its geniture.

NAPOLÉON

I have no remarks to make on that just now.
I'll think the matter over. You shall know
By noon to-morrow my definitive.

NEY (turning to go)

I trust my saying what had to be said
Has not affronted you?

NAPOLÉON (bitterly)

No; but your haste
In doing it has galled me, and has shown me
A heart that heaves no longer in my cause!
The skilled coquetting of the Government
Has nearly won you from old fellowship! . . .
Well; till to-morrow, marshal, then, Adieu.

[NEY goes.

Enter CAULAINCOURT and MACDONALD

Ney has got here before you; and, I deem,
Has truly told me all?

CAULAINCOURT

We thought at first
We should have had success. But fate said No;
And abdication, making no reserves,
Is, sire, we are convinced, with all respect,
The only road, if you care not to risk
The Empress' loss of every dignity,
And magnified misfortunes thrown on France.

NAPOLÉON

I have heard it all; and don't agree with you.
My assets are not quite so beggarly
That I must close in such a shameful bond!

What—do you rate as nought that I am yet
Full fifty thousand strong, with Augereau,
And Soult, and Suchet true, and many more?
I still may know to play the Imperial game
As well as Alexander and his friends!
So—you will see. Where are my maps?—eh, where?
I'll trace campaigns to come! Where's paper, ink,
To schedule all my generals and my means!

CAULAINCOURT

Sire, you have not the generals you suppose.

MACDONALD

And if you had, the mere anatomy
Of a real army, sire, that's left to you,
Must yield the war. A bad example tells.

NAPOLÉON

Ah—from your manner it is worse, I see,
Than I cognize! . . . O Marmont, Marmont,—yours,
Yours was the bad sad lead!—I treated him
As if he were a son!—defended him,
Made him a marshal out of sheer affection,
Built, as 'twere rock, on his fidelity!
"Forsake who may," I said, "I still have him."
Child that I was, I looked for faith in friends! . . .
Then be it as you will. Ney's manner shows
That even he inclines to Bourbonry.—
I faint to leave France thus—curtailed, pared down
From her late spacious borders. Of the whole
This is the keenest sword that pierces me. . . .
But all's too late: my course is closed, I see.
I'll do it—now. Call in Bertrand and Ney;
Let them be witness to my finishing!

In much agitation he goes to the writing-table and begins drawing up a paper. BERTRAND and NEY enter; and behind them are seen

through the doorway the faces of CONSTANT the valet, ROUSTAN the Mameluke, and other servants. All wait in silence till the EMPEROR has done writing. He turns in his seat without looking up.

NAPOLÉON (reading)

"It having been declared by the Allies
That the prime obstacle to Europe's peace
Is France's empery by Napoléon,
This ruler, faithful to his oath of old,
Renounces for himself and for his heirs
The throne of France and that of Italy;
Because no sacrifice, even of his life,
Is he averse to make for France's gain."
—And hereto do I sign. (He turns to the table and signs.)

The marshals, moved, rush forward and seize his hand.

Mark, marshals, here;
It is a conquering foe I covenant with,
And not the traitors at the Tuileries
Who call themselves the Government of France!
Caulaincourt, go to Paris as before,
Ney and Macdonald too, and hand in this
To Alexander, and to him alone.

He gives the document, and bids them adieu almost without speech. The marshals and others go out. NAPOLÉON continues sitting with his chin on his chest.

An interval of silence. There is then heard in the corridor a sound of whetting. Enter ROUSTAN the Mameluke, with a whetstone in his belt and a sword in his hand.

ROUSTAN

After this fall, your Majesty, 'tis plain
You will not choose to live; and knowing this
I bring to you my sword.

NAPOLÉON (with a nod)

I see you do,
Roustan.

ROUSTAN

Will you, sire, use it on yourself,
Or shall I pass it through you?

NAPOLÉON (coldly)

Neither plan
Is quite expedient for the moment, man.

ROUSTAN

Neither?

NAPOLÉON

There may be, in some suited time,
Some cleaner means of carrying out such work.

ROUSTAN

Sire, you refuse? Can you support vile life
A trice upon such terms? Why then, I pray,
Dispatch me with the weapon, or dismiss me.

(He holds the sword to NAPOLÉON, who shakes his head.)

I live no longer under such disgrace!

[Exit ROUSTAN haughtily.

NAPOLÉON vents a sardonic laugh, and throws himself on a sofa, where he by and by falls asleep.

The door is softly opened. ROUSTAN and CONSTANT peep in.

CONSTANT

To-night would be as good a time to go as any. He will sleep there for hours. I have my few francs safe, and I deserve them; for I have stuck to him honourably through fourteen trying years.

ROUSTAN

How many francs have you secured?

CONSTANT

Well—more than you can count in one breath, or even two.

ROUSTAN

Where?

CONSTANT

In a hollow tree in the Forest. And as for *your* reward, you can easily get the keys of that cabinet, where there are more than enough francs to equal mine. He will not have them, and you may as well take them as strangers.

ROUSTAN

It is not money that I want, but honour. I leave, because I can no longer stay with self-respect.

CONSTANT

And I because there is no other such valet in the temperate zone, and it is for the good of society that I should not be wasted here.

ROUSTAN

Well, as you propose going this evening I will go with you, to lend a symmetry to the drama of our departure. Would that I had served a more sensitive master! He sleeps there quite indifferent to the dishonour of remaining alive!

NAPOLÉON shows signs of waking. CONSTANT and ROUSTAN disappear. NAPOLÉON slowly sits up.

NAPOLÉON

Here the scene lingers still! Here linger I! . . .
Things could not have gone on as they were going;
I am amazed they kept their course so long.
But long or short they have ended now—at last!

(Footsteps are heard passing through the court without.)

Hark at them leaving me! So politic rats
Desert the ship that's doomed. By morrow-dawn
I shall not have a man to shake my bed
Or say good-morning to!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Herein behold
How heavily grinds the Will upon his brain,
His halting hand, and his unlighted eye.

SPIRIT IRONIC

A picture this for kings and subjects too!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Yet is it but Napoléon who has failed.
The pale pathetic peoples still plod on
Through hoodwinkings to light!

NAPOLÉON (rousing himself)

This now must close.
Roustan misunderstood me, though his hint
Serves as a fillip to a flaccid brain. . . .
—How gild the sunset sky of majesty
Better than by the act esteemed of yore?
Plutarchian heroes outstayed not their fame,
And what nor Brutus nor Themistocles
Nor Cato nor Mark Antony survived,
Why, why should I? Sage Cabanis, you primed me!

He unlocks a case, takes out a little bag containing a phial, pours from it a liquid into a glass, and drinks. He then lies down and falls asleep again.

Re-enter CONSTANT softly with a bunch of keys in his hand. On his way to the cabinet he turns and looks at NAPOLÉON. Seeing the glass and a strangeness in the EMPEROR, he abandons his object, rushes out, and is heard calling.

Enter MARET and BERTRAND.

BERTRAND (shaking the Emperor)

What is the matter, sire? What's this you've done?

NAPOLÉON (with difficulty)

Why did you interfere!—But it is well;
Call Caulaincourt. I'd speak with him a trice
Before I pass.

[MARET hurries out.

Enter IVAN the physician, and presently CAULAINCOURT.

Ivan, renew this dose;
'Tis a slow workman, and requires a fellow;
Age has impaired its early promptitude.

IVAN shakes his head and rushes away distracted. CAULAINCOURT seizes NAPOLÉON'S hand.

CAULAINCOURT

Why should you bring this cloud upon us now!

NAPOLÉON

Restrain your stricture. Let me die in peace.—
My wife and son I recommend to you;
Give her this letter, and the packet there.
Defend my memory, and protect their lives.

(They shake him. He vomits.)

CAULAINCOURT

He's saved—for good or ill—as may betide!

NAPOLÉON

God—here how difficult it is to die:
How easy on the passionate battle-plain!

They open a window and carry him to it. He mends.

Fate has resolved what man could not resolve.
I must live on, and wait what Heaven may send!

MACDONALD and other marshals re-enter. A letter is brought from MARIE LOUISE. NAPOLÉON reads it, and becomes more animated.

They are well; and they will join me in my exile.
Yes: I will live! The future who shall spell?
My wife, my son, will be enough for me.—
And I will give my hours to chronicling
In stately words that stir futurity
The might of our unmatched accomplishments;
And in the tale immortalize your names
By linking them with mine.

He soon falls into a convalescent sleep. The marshals, etc., go out.

The room is left in darkness.

SCENE V

BAYONNE. THE BRITISH CAMP

The foreground is an elevated stretch of land, dotted over in rows with the tents of the Peninsular army. On a parade immediately beyond the tents the infantry are drawn up, awaiting something. Still further back, behind a brook, are the French soldiery, also ranked in the same manner of reposeful expectation. In the middle-distance we see the town of Bayonne, standing within its zigzag fortifications at the junction of the river Adour with the Nive.

On the other side of the Adour rises the citadel, a fortified angular structure standing detached. A large and brilliant tricolor flag is waving indolently from a staff on the summit. The Bay of Biscay, into which the Adour flows, is seen on the left horizon as a level line.

The stillness observed by the soldiery of both armies, and by everything else in the scene except the flag, is at last broken by the firing of a signal-gun from a battery in the town-wall. The eyes of the thousands present rivet themselves on the citadel. Its waving tricolor moves down the flagstaff and disappears.

THE REGIMENTS (unconsciously)

Ha-a-a-a!

In a few seconds there shoots up the same staff another flag—one intended to be white; but having apparently been folded away a long time, it is mildewed and dingy.

From all the guns on the city fortifications a salute peals out. This is responded to by the English infantry and artillery with a feu-de-joie.

THE REGIMENTS

Hurrah-h-h-h!

The various battalions are then marched away in their respective directions and dismissed to their tents. The Bourbon standard is hoisted everywhere beside those of England, Spain, and Portugal.

The scene shuts.

SCENE VI

A HIGHWAY IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF AVIGNON

The Rhone, the old city walls, the Rocher des Doms and its edifices, appear at the back plane of the scene under the grey light of dawn. In the foreground several postillions and ostlers with relays of horses are waiting by the roadside, gazing northward and listening for sounds. A few loungers have assembled.

FIRST POSTILLION

He ought to be nigh by this time. I should say he'd be very glad to get to this here Isle of Elba, wherever it may be, if words be true that he's treated to such ghastly compliments on's way!

SECOND POSTILLION

Blast-me-blue, I don't care what happens to him! Look at Joachim Murat, him that's made King of

Naples; a man who was only in the same line of life as ourselves, born and bred in Cahors, out in Perigord, a poor little whindling place not half as good as our own. Why should he have been lifted up to king's anointment, and we not even have had a rise in wages? That's what I say.

FIRST POSTILLION

But now, I don't find fault with that dispensation in particular. It was one of our calling that the Emperor so honoured, after all, when he might have anointed a tinker, or a ragman, or a street woman's pensioner even. Who knows but that we should have been kings too, but for my crooked legs and your running pole-wound?

SECOND POSTILLION

We kings? Kings of the underground country, then, by this time, if we hadn't been too rotten-fleshed to follow the drum. However, I'll think over your defence, and I don't mind riding a stage with him, for that matter, to save him from them that mean mischief here. I've lost no sons by his battles, like some others we know.

Enter a TRAVELLER on horseback.

Any tidings along the road, sir, of the Emperor Napoléon that was?

TRAVELLER

Tidings verily! He and his escort are threatened by the mob at every place they come to. A courier from the south whom I have met tells me that at an inn a little way beyond here they have strung up his effigy to the sign-post, smeared it with blood, and placarded it "The Doom that awaits Thee!" He is much delayed by such humorous insults. I have hastened along to escape the uproar.

SECOND POSTILLION

I don't know that you have escaped it. The mob has been waiting up all night for him here.

[Exit TRAVELLER dubiously.

MARKET-WOMAN (coming up)

I hope by the Virgin, as 'a called herself, that there'll be no riots here! Though I have not much pity for a man who could treat his first wife as he did, and that's my real feeling. He might at least have kept them both on, for half a husband is better than none for poor women. But I'd show mercy to him, that's true, rather than have my stall upset, and messes in the streets wi' folks' brains, and stabbings, and I don't know what all!

FIRST POSTILLION

If we can do the horsing quietly out here, there will be none of that. He'll dash past the town without stopping at the inn where they expect to waylay him. —Hark, what's this coming?

An approaching cortège is heard. Two couriers enter; then a carriage containing GENERAL DROUOT; then a carriage with NAPOLÉON and BERTRAND; then others with the Commissioners of the Powers,—all on the way to Elba.

The carriages halt, and the change of horses is set about instantly. But before it is half completed BONAPARTE's arrival gets known, and throngs of men and women armed with sticks and hammers rush out of Avignon and surround the carriages.

POPULACE

Ogre of Corsica! Odious tyrant! Down with Nicholas!

BERTRAND (looking out of carriage)

Silence, and doff your hats, you ill-mannered devils!

POPULACE (scornfully)

Listen to him! Is that the Corsican? No; where is he? Give him up; give him up! We'll pitch him into the Rhone!

Some cling to the wheels of NAPOLÉON'S carriage, while others, more distant, throw stones at it. A stone breaks the carriage window.

OLD WOMAN (shaking her fist)

Give me back my two sons, murderer! Give me back my children, whose flesh is rotting on the Russian plains!

POPULACE

Ay; give us back our kin—our fathers, our brothers, our sons—victims to your curst ambition!

One of the mob seizes the carriage-door handle and tries to unfasten it. A valet of BONAPARTE'S seated on the box draws his sword and threatens to cut the man's arm off. The doors of the Commissioners' coaches open, and SIR NEIL CAMPBELL, GENERAL KOLLER, and COUNT SCHUVALOFF — the English, Austrian, and Russian Commissioners—jump out and come forward.

CAMPBELL

Keep order, citizens! Do you not know
That the ex-Emperor is wayfaring
To a lone isle, in the Allies' sworn care,
Who have given a pledge to Europe for his safety?
His fangs being drawn, he gnashes powerless now
To do you further harm.

SCHUVALOFF

People of France
Can you insult so miserable a being?
He who gave laws to a cowed world stands now
At that world's beck, and asks its charity.
Cannot you see that merely to ignore him
Is the worst ignominy to tar him with,
By showing him he's no longer dangerous?

OLD WOMAN

How do we know the villain mayn't come back?
While there is life, my faith, there's mischief in him!

Enter an officer with the Town-guard.

OFFICER

Citizens, I am a zealot for the Bourbons,
As you well know. But wanton breach of faith
I will not brook. Retire!

The soldiers drive back the mob and open a passage forward. The Commissioners re-enter their carriages. NAPOLÉON puts his head out of his window for a moment. He is haggard, shabbily dressed, yellow-faced, and wild-eyed.

NAPOLÉON

I thank you, captain;
Also your soldiery: a thousand thanks!
(To Bertrand within) My God, these people of Avignon here
Are headstrong fools, like all Provençal folk.
—I won't go through the town!

BERTRAND

We'll round it, sire;
And then, as soon as we get past the place,
You must disguise for the remainder miles.

NAPOLÉON

I'll mount the white cockade if they invite me!
What does it matter if I do or don't?
In Europe all is past and over with me. . . .
Yes—all is lost in Europe for me now!

BERTRAND

I fear so, sire.

NAPOLÉON (after some moments)

But Asia waits a man,
And—who can tell?

OFFICER OF GUARD (to postillions)

Ahead now at full speed,
And slacken not till you have slipped the town.

The postillions urge the horses to a gallop, and the carriages are out of sight in a few seconds.

The scene shuts.

SCENE VII

MALMAISON. THE EMPRESS JOSÉPHINE'S BEDCHAMBER

The walls are in white panels with gilt mouldings, and the furniture is upholstered in white silk with needle-worked flowers. The long windows and the bed are similarly draped, and the toilet service is of gold. Through the panes appears a broad flat lawn adorned with vases and figures on pedestals, and entirely surrounded by trees—just now in their first fresh green under the morning rays of Whitsunday. The notes of an organ are audible from a chapel below, where the Pentecostal Mass is proceeding.

JOSÉPHINE lies in the bed in an advanced stage of illness, the ABBÉ BERTRAND standing beside her. Two ladies-in-waiting are seated near. By the door into the ante-room, which is ajar, HOREAU the physician-in-ordinary and BOURDOIS the consulting physician are engaged in a low conversation.

HOREAU

Lamoureux says that leeches would have saved her
Had they been used in time, before I came.
In that case, then, why did he wait for me?

BOURDOIS

Such Whys are now too late! She is past all hope.
I doubt if aught had helped her. Not disease,
But heart-break and repinings are the blasts
That wither her long bloom. Soon we must tell
The Queen Hortense the worst, and the Viceroy.

HOREAU

Her death was made the easier task for grief
(As I regarded more than probable)
By her rash rising from a sore-sick bed
And donning thin and dainty May attire
To hail King Frederick-William and the Tsar
As banquet-guests, in the old regnant style.
A woman's innocent vanity!—but how dire.
She argued that amenities of State
Compelled the effort, since they had honoured her
By offering to come. I stood against it,
Pleaded and reasoned, but to no account.
Poor woman, what she did or did not do
Was of small moment to the State by then!
The Emperor Alexander has been kind
Throughout his stay in Paris. He came down
But yester-eve, of purpose to inquire.

BOURDOIS

Wellington is in Paris, too, I learn,
After his wasted battle at Toulouse.

HOREAU

Has his Peninsular army come with him?

BOURDOIS

I hear they have shipped it to America,
Where England has another war on hand.

We have armies quite sufficient here already—
Plenty of cooks for Paris broth just now!
—Come, call we Queen Hortense and Prince Eugène.

[Exeunt physicians.

The ABBÉ BERTRAND also goes out. JOSÉPHINE murmurs faintly.

FIRST LADY (going to the bedside)

I think I heard you speak, your Majesty?

JOSÉPHINE

I asked what hour it was—if dawn or eve?

FIRST LADY

Ten in the morning, Madame. You forget
You asked the same but a brief while ago.

JOSÉPHINE

Did I? I thought it was so long ago! . . .
I wished to go to Elba with him much,
But the Allies prevented me. And why?
I would not have disgraced him, or themselves!
I would have gone to him at Fontainebleau,
With my eight horses and my household train
In dignity, and quitted him no more. . . .
Although I am his wife no longer now,
I think I should have gone in spite of them,
Had I not feared perversions might be sown
Between him and the woman of his choice
For whom he sacrificed me.

SECOND LADY

It is more
Than she thought fit to do, your Majesty.

JOSÉPHINE

Perhaps she was influenced by her father's ire,
Or diplomatic reasons told against her.
And yet I was surprised she should allow
Aught secondary on earth to hold her from
A husband she has outwardly, at least,
Declared attachment to.

FIRST LADY

Especially
With ever one at hand—his son and hers—
Reminding her of him.

JOSÉPHINE

Yes. . . . Glad am I
I saw that child of theirs, though only once.
But—there was not full truth—not quite, I fear—
In what I told the Emperor that day
He led him in to me at Bagatelle,
That 'twas the happiest moment of my life.
I ought not to have said it. No! Forsooth
My feeling had too, too much gall in it
To let truth shape like that!—I also said
That when my arms were round him I forgot
That I was not his mother. So spoke I,
But O me,—I remembered it too well!—
He was a lovely child; in his fond prate
His father's voice was eloquent. One might say
I am well punished for my sins against him!

SECOND LADY

You have harmed no creature, Madame; much less him!

JOSÉPHINE

O but you don't quite know! . . . My coquetries
In our first married years nigh racked him through.

I cannot think how I could wax so wicked! . . .
He begged me come to him in Italy,
But I liked flirting in fair Paris best,
And would not go. The independent spouse
At that time was myself; but afterwards
I grew to be the captive, he the free.
Always 'tis so: the man wins finally!
My faults I've ransomed to the bottom sou
If ever a woman did! . . . I'll write to him—
I must—again, so that he understands.
Yes, I'll write now. Get me a pen and paper.

FIRST LADY (to Second Lady)

'Tis futile! She is too far gone to write;
But we must humour her.

They fetch writing materials. On returning to the bed they find her motionless. Enter EUGÈNE and QUEEN HORTENSE. Seeing the state their mother is in, they fall down on their knees by her bed. JOSÉPHINE recognizes them and smiles. Anon she is able to speak again.

JOSÉPHINE (faintly)

I am dying, dears;
And do not mind it—notwithstanding that
I feel I die regretted. You both love me!—
And as for France, I ever have desired
Her welfare, as you know—have wrought all things
A woman's scope could reach to forward it. . . .
And to you now who watch my ebbing here,
Declare I that Napoléon's first-chose wife
Has never caused her land a needless tear.
Tell him—these things I have said—bear him my love—
Tell him—I could not write!

An interval. She spasmodically flings her arms over her son and daughter, lets them fall, and becomes unconscious. They fetch a looking-glass, and find that her breathing has ceased. The clock of the Château strikes noon.

The scene is veiled.

SCENE VIII

LONDON. THE OPERA-HOUSE

The house is lighted up with a blaze of wax candles, and a State performance is about to begin in honour of the Allied sovereigns now on a visit to England to celebrate the Peace. Peace-devices adorn the theatre. A band can be heard in the street playing "The White Cockade."

An extended Royal box has been formed by removing the partitions of adjoining boxes. It is empty as yet, but the other parts of the house are crowded to excess, and somewhat disorderly, the interior doors having been broken down by besiegers, and many people having obtained admission without payment. The prevalent costume of the ladies is white satin and diamonds, with a few in lilac.

The curtain rises on the first act of the opera of "Aristodemo," MADAME GRASSINI and SIGNOR TRAMEZZINI being the leading voices. Scarcely a note of the performance can be heard amid the exclamations of persons half suffocated by the pressure.

At the end of the first act there follows a divertissement. The curtain having fallen, a silence of expectation succeeds. It is a little past ten o'clock.

Enter the Royal box the PRINCE REGENT, accompanied by the EMPEROR ALEXANDER OF RUSSIA, demonstrative in manner now as always, the KING OF PRUSSIA, with his mien of reserve, and many minor ROYAL PERSONAGES of Europe. There are moderate acclamations. At their back and in neighbouring boxes LORD LIVERPOOL, LORD CASTLEREAGH, officers in the suite of the sovereigns, interpreters, and others take their places.

The curtain rises again, and the performers are discovered drawn up in line on the stage. They sing "God save the King." The sovereigns stand up, bow, and resume their seats amid more applause.

A VOICE (from the gallery)

Prinny, where's your wife? (Confusion.)

EMPEROR OF RUSSIA (to Regent)

To which of us is the inquiry addressed, Prince?

PRINCE REGENT

To you, sire, depend upon't—by way of compliment.

The second act of the Opera proceeds.

EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

Any later news from Elba, sir?

PRINCE REGENT

Nothing more than rumours, which, 'pon my honour, I can hardly credit. One is that Bonaparte's valet has written to say that the ex-Emperor is becoming imbecile, and is an object of ridicule to the inhabitants of the island.

KING OF PRUSSIA

A blessed result, sir, if true. If he is not imbecile he is worse—planning how to involve Europe in another war. It was a short-sighted policy to offer him a home so near as to ensure its becoming a hot-bed of intrigue and conspiracy in no long time!

PRINCE REGENT

The ex-Empress, Marie-Louise, hasn't joined him after all, I learn. Has she remained at Schönbrunn since leaving France, sires?

EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

Yes, sir; with her son. She must never go back to France. Metternich and her father will know better than let her do that. Poor young thing, I am sorry for her all the same. She would have joined Napoléon if she had been left to herself.—And I was sorry for the other wife, too. I called at Malmaison a few days before she died. A charming woman! *She*

would have gone to Elba or to the devil with him. Twenty thousand people crowded down from Paris to see her lying in state last week.

PRINCE REGENT

Pity she didn't have a child by him, by God.

KING OF PRUSSIA

I don't think the other one's child is going to trouble us much. But I wish Bonaparte himself had been sent further away.

PRINCE REGENT

Some of our Government wanted to pack him off to St. Helena—an island somewhere in the Atlantic, or Pacific, or Great South Sea. But they were overruled. 'Twould have been a surer game.

EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

One hears strange stories of his sayings and doings. Some of my people were telling me to-day that he says it is to Austria that he really owes his fall, and that he ought to have destroyed her when he had her in his power.

PRINCE REGENT

Dammy, sire, don't ye think he owes his fall to his ambition to humble England by the rupture of the Peace of Amiens, and trying to invade us, and wasting his strength against us in the Peninsula?

EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

I incline to think, with the greatest deference, that it was Moscow that broke him.

KING OF PRUSSIA

The rejection of my conditions in the terms of peace at Prague, sires, was the turning-point towards his downfall.

Enter a box on the opposite side of the house the PRINCESS OF WALES, attended by LADY CHARLOTTE CAMPBELL, SIR W. GELL, and others. Louder applause now rings through the theatre, drowning the sweet voice of the GRASSINI in "Aristodemo."

LADY CHARLOTTE CAMPBELL

It is meant for your Royal Highness!

PRINCESS OF WALES

I don't think so, my dear. Punch's wife is nobody when Punch himself is present.

LADY CHARLOTTE CAMPBELL

I feel convinced that it is by their looking this way.

SIR W. GELL

Surely, ma'am, you will acknowledge their affection? Otherwise we may be hissed.

PRINCESS OF WALES

I know my business better than to take that morsel out of my husband's mouth. There—you see he enjoys it! I cannot assume that it is meant for me unless they call my name.

The PRINCE REGENT rises and bows, the TSAR and the KING OF PRUSSIA doing the same.

LADY CHARLOTTE CAMPBELL

He and the others are bowing to you, ma'am!

PRINCESS OF WALES

Mine God, then; I will bow too! (She rises and bends to them.)

PRINCE REGENT

She thinks we rose on her account.—A damn fool! (Aside.)

EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

What—didn't we? I certainly rose in homage to her.

PRINCE REGENT

No, sire. We were supposed to rise to the repeated applause of the people.

EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

H'm. Your customs, sir, are a little puzzling. . . . (To the King of Prussia.) A fine-looking woman! I must call upon the Princess of Wales to-morrow.

KING OF PRUSSIA

I shall, at any rate, send her my respects by my chamberlain.

PRINCE REGENT (stepping back to Lord Liverpool)

By God, Liverpool, we must do something to stop 'em! They don't know what a laughing-stock they'll make of me if they go to her. Tell 'em they had better not.

LIVERPOOL

I can hardly tell them now, sir, while we are celebrating the Peace and Wellington's victories.

PRINCE REGENT

Oh, damn the peace, and damn the war, and damn Boney, and damn Wellington's victories!—the question is, how am I to get over this infernal woman!—Well, well,—I must write, or send Tyrwhitt to-morrow morning, begging them to abandon the idea of visiting her for politic reasons.

The Opera proceeds to the end, and is followed by a hymn and chorus laudatory of peace. Next a new ballet by MONSIEUR VESTRIS, in which M. ROZIER and MADAME ANGIOLINI dance a pas-de-deux. Then the Sovereigns leave the theatre amid more applause.

The pit and gallery now call for the PRINCESS OF WALES unmistakably. She stands up and is warmly acclaimed, returning three stately curtseys.

A VOICE

Shall we burn down Carlton House, my dear, and him in it?

PRINCESS OF WALES

No, my good folks! Be quiet. Go home to your beds, and let me do the same.

After some difficulty she gets out of the house. The people thin away. As the candle-snuffers extinguish the lights a shouting is heard without.

VOICES OF CROWD

Long life to the Princess of Wales! Three cheers for a woman wronged!

The Opera-house becomes lost in darkness.

ACT FIFTH

SCENE I

ELBA. THE QUAY, PORTO FERRAJO

Night descends upon a beautiful blue cove, enclosed on three sides by mountains. The port lies towards the western (right-hand) horn of the concave, behind it being the buildings of the town; their long white walls and rows of windows rise tier above tier on the steep incline at the back, and are intersected by narrow alleys and flights of steps that lead up to forts on the summit.

Upon a rock between two of these forts stands the Palace of the Mulini, NAPOLÉON'S residence in Ferrajo. Its windows command the whole town and port.

CHORUS OF IRONIC SPIRITS (aerial music)

The Congress of Vienna sits,
And war becomes a war of wits,
Where every Power perpends withal
Its dues as large, its friends' as small;
Till Priests of Peace prepare once more
To fight as they have fought before!

In Paris there is discontent;
Medals are wrought that represent
One now unnamed. Men whisper, "He
Who once has been, again will be!"

DUMB SHOW

Under cover of the dusk there assembles in the bay a small flotilla comprising a brig called *l'Inconstant* and several lesser vessels.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

The guardian on behalf of the Allies
Absents himself from Elba. Slow surmise
Too vague to pen, too actual to ignore,
Have strained him hour by hour, and more and more.
He takes the sea to Florence, to declare
His doubts to Austria's ministrator there.

SPIRIT IRONIC

When he returns, Napoléon will be—where?

Boats put off from these ships to the quay, where are now discovered to have silently gathered a body of grenadiers of the Old Guard. The faces of DROUOT and CAMBRONNE are revealed by the occasional fleck of a lantern to be in command of them. They are quietly taken aboard the brig, and a number of men of different arms to the other vessels.

CHORUS OF RUMOURS (aerial music)

Napoléon is going,
And nought will prevent him;
He snatches the moment
Occasion has lent him!

And what is he going for,
Worn with war's labours?
—To reconquer Europe
With seven hundred sabres.

About eight o'clock we observe that the windows of the Palace of the Mulini are lighted and open, and that two women sit at them: the EMPEROR'S mother and the PRINCESS PAULINE. They wave adieux to some one below, and in a short time a little open low-wheeled carriage, drawn by the PRINCESS PAULINE'S two ponies, descends from the house to the port. The crowd exclaims "The Emperor!" NAPOLÉON appears in his grey great-coat, and is much fatter than when he left France. BERTRAND sits beside him.

He quickly alights and enters the waiting boat. It is a tense moment. As the boat rows off the sailors sing the Marseillaise, and the gathered inhabitants join in. When the boat reaches the brig its sailors join in also, and shout "Paris or death!" Yet the singing has a melancholy cadence. A gun fires as a signal of departure.

The night is warm and balmy for the season. Not a breeze is there to stir a sail, and the ships are motionless.

CHORUS OF RUMOURS

Haste is salvation;
And still he stays waiting:
The calm plays the tyrant,
His venture belating!

Should the corvette return
With the anxious Scotch colonel,
Escape would be frustrate,
Retention eternal.

Four aching hours are spent thus. NAPOLÉON remains silent on deck, looking at the town lights, whose reflections bore like augers into the waters of the bay. The sails hang flaccidly. Then a feeble breeze, then a strong south wind, begins to belly the sails; and the vessels move.

CHORUS OF RUMOURS

The south wind, the south wind,
The south wind will save him,
Embaying the frigate
Whose speed would enslave him;
Restoring the Empire
That fortune once gave him!

The moon rises, and the ships silently disappear over the horizon as it mounts higher into the sky.

SCENE II

VIENNA. THE IMPERIAL PALACE

The fore-part of the scene is the interior of a dimly lit gallery with an openwork screen or grille on one side of it that commands a bird's-eye view of the grand saloon below. At present the screen is curtained. Sounds of music and applause in the saloon ascend into

the gallery, and an irradiation from the same quarter shines up through chinks in the curtains of the grille.

Enter the gallery MARIE LOUISE and the COUNTESS OF BRIGNOLE, followed by the COUNT NEIPPERG, a handsome man of forty-two with a bandage over one eye.

COUNTESS OF BRIGNOLE

Listen, your Majesty. You gather all
As well as if you moved amid them there,
And are advantaged with free scope to flit
The moment the scene palls.

MARIE LOUISE

Ah, my dear friend,
To put it so is flower-sweet of you;
But a fallen Empress, doomed to furtive peeps
At scenes her open presence would unhinge,
Reads not much interest in them! Yet, in truth,
'Twas gracious of my father to arrange
This glimpse-hole for my curiosity.
—But I must write a letter ere I look;
You can amuse yourself with watching them.—
Count, bring me pen and paper. I am told
Madame de Montesquiou has been distressed
By some alarm; I write to ask its shape.

NEIPPERG spreads writing materials on a table, and MARIE LOUISE sits. While she writes he stays near her. MADAME DE BRIGNOLE goes to the screen and parts the curtains.

The light of a thousand candles blazes up into her eyes from below. The great hall is decorated in white and silver, enriched by evergreens and flowers. At the end a stage is arranged, and Tableaux Vivants are in progress thereon, representing the history of the House of Austria, in which figure the most charming women of the Court.

There are present as spectators nearly all the notables who have assembled for the Congress, including the EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA himself, his gay wife, who quite eclipses him, the EMPEROR ALEXANDER, the KING OF PRUSSIA—still in the mourning he has never abandoned since the death of QUEEN LOUISA,—the KING OF BAVARIA and his son, METTERNICH, TALLEYRAND, WELLINGTON, NESSELRODE, HARDENBERG; and minor princes, ministers, and officials of all nations.

COUNTESS OF BRIGNOLE (suddenly from the grille)

Something has happened—so it seems, Madame!
The Tableau gains no heed from them, and all
Turn murmuring together.

MARIE LOUISE

What may it be?

She rises with languid curiosity, and COUNT NEIPPERG adroitly takes her hand and leads her forward. All three look down through the grille.

NEIPPERG

Some strange news, certainly, your Majesty,
Is being discussed.—I'll run down and inquire.

MARIE LOUISE (playfully)

Nay—stay you here. We shall learn soon enough.

NEIPPERG

Look at their faces now. Count Metternich
Stares at Prince Talleyrand—no muscle moving.
The King of Prussia blinks bewilderedly
Upon Lord Wellington.

MARIE LOUISE (concerned)

Yes; so it seems. . . .
They are thunderstruck. See, though the music beats,
The ladies of the Tableau leave their place,
And mingle with the rest, and quite forget
That they are in masquerade. The sovereigns show
By far the gravest mien. . . . I wonder, now,
If it has aught to do with me or mine?
Disasters mostly have to do with me!

COUNTESS OF BRIGNOLE

Those rude diplomatists from England there,
At your Imperial father's consternation,
And Russia's, and the King of Prussia's gloom,
Shake shoulders with hid laughter! That they call
The English sense of humour, I infer,—
To see a jest in other people's troubles!

MARIE LOUISE (hiding her presages)

They ever take things thus phlegmatically:
The safe sea scantles Continental scares
In their regard. I wish it did in mine!
But Wellington laughs not, as I discern.

NEIPPERG

Perhaps, though fun for the other English here,
It means new work for him. Ah—notice now
The music makes no more pretence to play!
Sovereigns and ministers have moved apart,
And talk, and leave the ladies quite aloof—
Even the Grand Duchesses and Empress, all—
Such mighty cogitations trance their minds!

MARIE LOUISE (with more anxiety)

Poor ladies; yea, they draw into the rear,
And whisper ominous words among themselves!
Count Neipperg—I must ask you now—go glean
What evil lowers. I am riddled through
With strange surmises and more strange alarms!

The COUNTESS OF MONTESQUIOU enters.

Ah—we shall learn it now. Well—what, madame?

COUNTESS OF MONTESQUIOU (breathlessly)

Your Majesty, the Emperor Napoléon
Has vanished out of Elba! Whither flown,
And how, and why, nobody says or knows.

MARIE LOUISE (sinking into a chair)

My divination pencilled on my brain
Something not unlike that! The rigid mien
That mastered Wellington suggested it. . . .
Complicity will be ascribed to me,
Unwitting though I stand! . . . (A pause.)
He'll not succeed!
And my fair plans for Parma will be marred,
And my son's future fouled!—I must go hence,
And instantly declare to Metternich
That I know nought of this; and in his hands
Place me unquestioningly, with dumb assent
To serve the Allies. . . . Methinks that I was born
Under an evil-coloured star, whose ray
Darts death at joys!—Take me away, Count.—You
(to the two ladies)
Can stay and see the end.

[Exeunt MARIE LOUISE and NEIPPERG.

MESDAMES DE MONTESQUIOU and DE BRIGNOLE go to the grille and watch and listen.

VOICE OF ALEXANDER (below)

I told you, Prince, that it would never last!

VOICE OF TALLEYRAND

Well, sire, you should have sent him to the Azores,
Or the Antilles, or best, Saint-Helena.

VOICE OF THE KING OF PRUSSIA

Instead, we send him but two days from France,
Give him an island as his own domain,
A military guard of large resource,
And millions for his purse!

ANOTHER VOICE

The immediate cause
Must be a negligence in watching him.
The British Colonel Campbell should have seen
That apertures for flight were wired and barred
To such a cunning bird!

ANOTHER VOICE

By all report
He took the course direct to Naples Bay.

VOICES (of new arrivals)

He has made his way to France—so all tongues tell—
And landed there, at Cannes! (Excitement.)

COUNTESS OF BRIGNOLE

Do now but note
How cordial intercourse resolves itself
To sparks of sharp debate! The lesser guests
Are fain to steal unnoticed from a scene
Wherein they feel themselves as surplusage
Beside the official minds.—I catch a sign
The King of Prussia makes the English Duke;
They leave the room together.

COUNTESS OF MONTESQUIOU

Yes; wit wanes,
And all are going—Prince de Talleyrand,
The Emperor Alexander, Metternich,
The Emperor Francis. . . . So much for the Congress!
Only a few blank nobodies remain,
And they seem terror-stricken. . . . Blackly ends
Such fair festivities. The red god War
Stalks Europe's plains anew!

The curtain of the grille is dropped. MESDAMES DE MONTESQUIOU and DE BRIGNOLE leave the gallery. The light is extinguished there and the scene disappears.

SCENE III

LA MURE, NEAR GRENOBLE

A lonely road between a lake and some hills, two or three miles outside the village of la Mure, is discovered. A battalion of the Fifth French royalist regiment of the line, under COMMANDANT LESSARD, is drawn up in the middle of the road with a company of sappers and miners, comprising altogether about eight hundred men.

Enter to them from the south a small detachment of lancers with an aide-de-camp at their head. They ride up to within speaking distance.

LESSARD

They are from Bonaparte. Present your arms!

AIDE (calling)

We'd parley on Napoléon's behalf,
And fain would ask you join him.

LESSARD

All parole
With rebel bands the Government forbids.
Come five steps further, and we fire!

AIDE

To France,
And to posterity through fineless time,
Must you then answer for so foul a blow
Against the common weal!

NAPOLÉON'S aide-de-camp and the lancers turn about and ride back out of sight. The royalist troops wait. Presently there reappears from the same direction a small column of soldiery, representing the whole of NAPOLÉON'S little army shipped from Elba. It is divided into an advance-guard under COLONEL MALLET, and two bodies behind, a troop of Polish lancers under COLONEL

JERMANWSKI on the right side of the road, and some officers without troops on the left, under MAJOR PACCONI.

NAPOLÉON rides in the midst of the advance-guard, in the old familiar "redingote grise," cocked hat, and tricolor cockade, his well-known profile keen against the hills. He is attended by GENERALS BERTRAND, DROUOT, and CAMBRONNE. When they get within a gun-shot of the royalists the men are halted. NAPOLÉON dismounts and steps forward.

NAPOLÉON

Direct the men
To lodge their weapons underneath the arm,
Points downward. I shall not require them here.

COLONEL MALLET

Sire, is it not a needless jeopardy
To meet them thus? The sentiments of these
We do not know, and the first trigger pressed
May end you.

NAPOLÉON

I have thought it out, my friend,
And value not my life as in itself,
But as to France, severed from whose embrace
I am dead already.

He repeats the order, which is carried out. There is a breathless silence, and people from the village gather round with tragic expectations. NAPOLÉON walks on alone towards the Fifth battalion, throwing open his great-coat and revealing his uniform and the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. Raising his hand to his hat he salutes.

LESSARD

Present arms!

The firelocks of the royalist battalion are levelled at NAPOLÉON.

NAPOLÉON (still advancing)

Men of the Fifth,
See—here I am! . . . Old friends, do you not know me?

If there be one among you who would slay
His Chief of proud past years, let him come on
And do it now! (A pause.)

LESSARD (to his next officer)

They are death-white at his words!
They'll fire not on this man. And I am helpless.

SOLDIERS (suddenly)

Why yes! We know you, father. Glad to see ye!
The Emperor for ever! Ha! Huzza!

They throw their arms upon the ground, and, rushing forward, sink down and seize NAPOLÉON'S knees and kiss his hands. Those who cannot get near him wave their shakos and acclaim him passionately. BERTRAND, DROUOT, and CAMBRONNE come up.

NAPOLÉON (privately)

All is accomplished, Bertrand! Ten days more,
And we are snug within the Tuileries.

The soldiers tear out their white cockades and trample on them, and disinter from the bottom of their knapsacks tricolors, which they set up.

NAPOLÉON'S own men now arrive, and fraternize with and embrace the soldiers of the Fifth. When the emotion has subsided NAPOLÉON forms the whole body into a square and addresses them.

Soldiers, I come with these few faithful ones
To save you from the Bourbons,—treasons, tricks,
Ancient abuses, feudal tyranny—
From which I once of old delivered you.
The Bourbon throne is illegitimate
Because not founded on the nation's will,
But propped up for the profit of a few.
Comrades, is this not so?

A GRENADIER

Yes, verily, sire.

You are the Angel of the Lord to us;
We'll march with you to death or victory!
(Shouts.)

At this moment a howling dog crosses in front of them with a white cockade tied to its tail. The soldiery of both sides laugh loudly.

NAPOLÉON forms both bodies of troops into one column. Peasantry run up with buckets of sour wine and a single glass; NAPOLÉON takes his turn with the rank and file in drinking from it. He bids the whole column follow him to Grenoble and Paris. Exeunt soldiers headed by NAPOLÉON.

The scene shuts.

SCENE IV

SCHÖNBRUNN

The gardens of the Palace. Fountains and statuary are seen around, and the Gloriette colonnade rising against the sky on a hill behind.

The ex-EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE is discovered walking up and down. Accompanying her is the KING OF ROME—now a blue-eyed, fair-haired child—in the charge of the COUNTESS OF MONTESQUIOU. Close by is COUNT NEIPPERG, and at a little distance MÉNEVAL, her attendant and NAPOLÉON'S adherent.

The EMPEROR FRANCIS and METTERNICH enter at the other end of the parterre.

MARIE LOUISE (with a start)

Here are the Emperor and Prince Metternich.
Wrote you as I directed?

NEIPPERG

Promptly so.
I said your Majesty had had no part
In this mad move of your Imperial spouse,
And willed yourself a ward of the Allies;
Adding, that you had vowed irrevocably
To enter France no more.

MARIE LOUISE

Your worthy zeal
Has been a trifle swift. My meaning stretched
Not quite so far as that. . . . And yet—and yet
It matters little. Nothing matters much!

The EMPEROR and METTERNICH come forward. NEIPPERG retires.

FRANCIS

My daughter, you did not a whit too soon
Voice your repudiation. Have you seen
What the Allies have papered Europe with?

MARIE LOUISE

I have seen nothing.

FRANCIS

Please you read it, Prince.

METTERNICH (taking out a paper)

"The Powers assembled at the Congress here
Owe it to their own troths and dignities,
And to the furtherance of social order,
To make a solemn Declaration, thus:
By breaking the convention as to Elba,
Napoléon Bonaparte forthwith destroys
His only legal title to exist,
And as a consequence has hurled himself
Beyond the pale of civil intercourse.
Disturber of the tranquillity of the world,
There can be neither peace nor truce with him,
And public vengeance is his self-sought doom.—
Signed by the Plenipotentiaries."

MARIE LOUISE (pale)

O God,
How terrible! . . . What shall—— (she begins weeping)

KING OF ROME

Is it papa
They want to hurt like that, dear Mamma 'Quiou?
Then 'twas no good my praying for him so;
And I can see that I am not going to be
A King much longer!

COUNTESS OF MONTESQUIOU (retiring with the child)

Pray for him, Monseigneur,
Morning and evening just the same! They plan
To take you off from me. But don't forget—
Do as I say!

KING OF ROME

Yes, Mamma 'Quiou, I will!—
But why have I no pages now? And why
Does my mamma the Empress weep so much?

COUNTESS OF MONTESQUIOU

We'll talk elsewhere.

[MONTESQUIOU and the KING OF ROME withdraw to back.

FRANCIS

At least, then, you agree
Not to attempt to follow Paris-wards
Your conscience-lacking husband, and create
More troubles in the State?—Remember this,
I sacrifice my every man and horse
Ere he rule France again.

MARIE LOUISE

I am pledged already
To hold by the Allies ; let that suffice !

METTERNICH

For the clear good of all, your Majesty,
And for your safety and the King of Rome's,
It most befits that your Imperial father
Should have sole charge of the young king henceforth,
While these convulsions rage. That this is so
You will see, I think, in view of being installed
As Parma's Duchess, and take steps therefor.

MARIE LOUISE (coldly)

I understand the terms to be as follows :
Parma is mine—my very own possession,—
And as a counterquit, the guardianship
Is ceded to my father of my son,
And I keep out of France.

METTERNICH

And likewise this :
All missives that your Majesty receives
Under Napoléon's hand, you tender straight
The Austrian Cabinet, the seals unbroke ;
With those received already.

FRANCIS

You discern
How vastly to the welfare of your son
This course must tend ? Duchess of Parma throned
You shine a wealthy woman, to endow
Your son with fortune and large landed fee.

MARIE LOUISE (bitterly)

I must have Parma: and those being the terms
Perforce accept! I weary of the strain
Of statecraft and political embroil:
I long for private quiet! . . . And now wish
To say no more at all.

MÉNEVAL, who has heard her latter remarks, turns sadly away.

FRANCIS

There's nought to say;
All is in train to work straightforwardly.

[FRANCIS and METTERNICH depart.

MARIE LOUISE retires towards the child and the COUNTESS OF MONTESQUIOU at the back of the parterre, where they are joined by NEIPPERG.

Enter in front DE MONTROND, a secret emissary of NAPOLÉON, disguised as a florist examining the gardens. MÉNEVAL recognizes him and comes forward.

MÉNEVAL

Why are you here, de Montrond? All is hopeless!

DE MONTROND

Wherefore? The offer of the Regency
I come empowered to make, and will conduct her
Safely to Strassburg with her little son,
If she shrink not to breech her as a man,
And tiptoe from a postern unperceived?

MÉNEVAL

Though such quaint gear would mould her to a youth
Fair as Adonis on a hunting morn,
Yet she'll refuse! A German prudery
Sits on her still; more, kneaded by their arts
There's no will left to her. I conjured her
To hold aloof, sign nothing. But in vain.

DE MONTROND (looking towards Marie Louise)

I fain would put it to her privately!

MÉNEVAL

A thing impossible. No word to her
Without a word to him you see with her,
Neipperg to wit. She grows indifferent
To dreams as Regent; visioning a future
Wherein her son and self are two of three,
But where the third is not Napoléon.

DE MONTROND (in sad surprise)

I may as well go hence then as I came,
And kneel to Heaven for one thing—that success
Attend Napoléon in the coming throes!

MÉNEVAL

I'll walk with you for safety to the gate,
Though I am as the Emperor's man suspect,
And any day may be dismissed. If so
I go to Paris.

[Exeunt MÉNEVAL and DE MONTROND.

SPIRIT IRONIC

Had he but persevered, and biassed her
To slip the breeches on, and hie away,
Who knows but that the map of France had shaped
As it will never now!

There enters from the other side of the gardens MARIA CAROLINA, ex-Queen of Naples, grandmother of MARIE LOUISE. The latter, dismissing MONTESQUIOU and the child, comes forward.

MARIA CAROLINA

I have crossed from Hetzendorf to kill an hour;
Why art so pensive, dear?

MARIE LOUISE

Ah, why! My lines
Rule ruggedly. You doubtless have perused
This vicious cry against the Emperor?
He's outlawed—to be caught alive or dead,
Like any noisome beast!

MARIA CAROLINA

Nought have I heard,
My child. But these vile tricks, to pluck you from
Your nuptial plightage and your rightful glory
Make me belch oaths!—You shall not join your husband
Do they assert? My God, I know one thing,
Outlawed or no, I'd knot my sheets forthwith,
Were I but you, and steal to him in disguise,
Let come what would come! Marriage is for life.

MARIE LOUISE

Mostly; not always: not with Joséphine;
And, maybe, not with me. But, that apart,
I could do nothing so outrageous now.
Too many things, dear grand-dame, you forget.
A puppet I, by force inflexible,
Was bid to wed Napoléon at a nod,—
The man acclaimed to me from cradle-days
As the incarnate of all evil things,
The Antichrist himself.—I kissed the cup,
Gulped down the inevitable, and married him;
But none the less I saw myself therein
The lamb whose innocent flesh was dressed to grace
The altar of dynastic ritual!—
Hence Elba flung no duty-call to me,
Neither does Paris now.

MARIA CAROLINA

I do perceive
They have worked on you to much effect already!
Go, join your Count; he waits you, dear.—Well, well;
The way the wind blows needs no cock to tell!

Exeunt severally QUEEN MARIA CAROLINA and MARIE LOUISE with NEIPPERG.

The sun sets over the gardens and the scene fades.

SCENE V

LONDON. THE OLD HOUSE OF COMMONS

The interior of the Chamber appears as in Scene III., Act I., Part I., except that the windows are not open and the trees without are not yet green.

Among the Members discovered in their places are, of ministers and their supporters, LORD CASTLEREAGH the Foreign Secretary, VANSITTART Chancellor of the Exchequer, BATHURST, PALMERSTON the War Secretary, ROSE, PONSONBY, ARBUTHNOT, LUSHINGTON, GARROW the Attorney-General, SHEPHERD, LONG, PLUNKETT, BANKES; and among those of the Opposition SIR FRANCIS BURDETT, WHITBREAD, TIERNEY, ABERCROMBY, DUNDAS, BRAND, DUNCANNON, LAMBTON, HEATHCOTE, SIR SAMUEL ROMILLY, G. WALPOLE, RIDLEY, OSBORNE, and HORNER.

Much interest in the debate is apparent, and the galleries are full. LORD CASTLEREAGH rises.

CASTLEREAGH

At never a moment in my stressed career,
Amid no memory-moving urgencies,
Have I, sir, felt so gravely set on me
The sudden, vast responsibility
That I feel now. Few things conceivable
Could more momentous to the future be
Than what may spring from counsel here to-night
On means to meet the plot, unparalleled,

In full fierce play elsewhere. Sir, this being so,
And seeing how the events of these last days
Menace the toil of twenty anxious years,
And peril all that period's patient aim,
No auguring mind can doubt that counterstrokes
Of steadiest purpose only, will effect
Deliverance from a world-calamity
As dark as any in the dens of Time.
Now, what we notice front and foremost is
That this convulsion speaks not, pictures not
The heart of France. It comes of artifice—
From the unique and sinister influence
Of a smart army-gamester—upon men
Who have shared his own excitements, spoils, and crimes.—
This man, who calls himself most impiously
The Emperor of France by Grace of God,
Has, in the scale of human character,
Dropt down so low, that he has set at nought
All pledges, stipulations, guarantees,
And stepped upon the only pedestal
On which he cares to stand—his lawless will.
Indeed, it is a fact scarce credible
That so mysteriously in his own breast
Did this adventurer lock the plot he planned,
That his companion Bertrand, chief in trust,
Was unapprised thereof until the hour
In which the order to embark was given!
I think the House will readily discern
That the wise, wary trackway to be trod
By our own country in the crisis reached,
Must lie 'twixt two alternatives,—of war
In concert with the Continental Powers,
Or of an armed and cautionary course
Sufficing for the present pucker of things.
Whatever differences of view prevail
On the so serious and impending question—
Whether in point of prudent reckoning
'Twere better let the Power set up exist,

Or promptly at the outset deal with it—
Still, to all eyes it is imperative
That some mode of safeguardance be devised;
And if I cannot range before the House,
At this stage, all the reachings of the case,
I will, if needful, on some future day
Poise these nice matters on their merits here.
Meanwhile I have to move:
That an address unto His Royal Highness
Be humbly offered for his gracious message,
And to assure him that his faithful Commons
Are fully roused to the dark hazardries
To which the life and equanimity
Of Europe are exposed by deeds in France,
In contravention of the plighted pacts
At Paris in the course of yester-year.
That, in a cause of such wide-waked concern,
It doth afford us real relief to know
That concert with His Majesty's Allies
Is being effected with no loss of time—
Such concert as will thoroughly provide
For Europe's full and long security. (Cheers.)
That we, with zeal, will speed such help to him
So to augment his force by sea and land
As shall empower him to set afoot
Swift measures meet for its accomplishing. (Cheers.)

BURDETT

It seems to me almost impossible,
Weighing the language of the noble lord,
To catch its counsel,—whether peace or war. (Hear, hear.)
If I translate his words to signify
The high expediency of watch and ward,
That we may not be taken unawares,
I own concurrence; but if he propose
To plunge this realm into a sea of blood
To reinstate the Bourbon line in France,

I should but poorly do my duty here
Did I not lift my voice protestingly
Against so ruinous an enterprise!
Sir, I am old enough to call to mind
The first fierce frenzies for the selfsame end,
The fruit of which was to endow this man,
The object of your apprehension now,
With such a might as could not be withstood
By all of banded Europe, till he roamed
And wrecked it wantonly on Russian plains.
Shall, then, another score of scourging years
Distract this land to make a Bourbon king?
Wrongly has Bonaparte's late course been called
A rude incursion on the soil of France.—
Who ever knew a sole and single man
Invade a nation thirty million strong,
And gain in some few days full sovereignty
Against that nation's will!—The truth is this:
The nation longed for him, and has obtained him. . . .
I have beheld the agonies of war
Through many a weary season; seen enough
To make me hold that scarcely any goal
Is worth the reaching by so red a road.
No man can doubt that this Napoléon stands
As Emperor of France by Frenchmen's wills.
Let the French settle, then, their own affairs;
I say we shall have nought to apprehend!—
Much as I might advance in proof of this,
I'll dwell not thereon now. I am satisfied
To give the general reasons which, in brief,
Balk my concurrence in the Address proposed. (Cheers.)

PONSONBY

My words will be but few, for the Address
Constrains me to support it as it stands.
So far from being the primary step to war,
Its sense and substance is, in my regard,
To leave the House to guidance by events

On the grave question of hostilities.
The statements of the noble lord, I hold,
Have not been candidly interpreted
By grafting on to them a headstrong will,
As does the honourable baronet,
To rob the French of Buonaparté's rule,
And force them back to Bourbon monarchism.
That our free land, at this abnormal time,
Should put her in a pose of wariness,
No unwarped mind can doubt. Must war revive,
Let it be quickly waged; and quickly, too,
Reach its effective end: though 'tis my hope,
My ardent hope, that peace may be preserved.

WHITBREAD

Were it that I could think, as does my friend,
That ambiguity of sentiment
Informed the utterance of the noble lord
(As oft does ambiguity of word),
I might with satisfied and sure resolve
Vote straight for the Address. But eyeing well
The flimsy web there woven to entrap
The credence of my honourable friends,
I must with all my energy contest
The wisdom of a new and hot crusade
For fixing who shall fill the throne of France!
Already are the seeds of mischief sown:
The Declaration at Vienna, signed
Against Napoléon, is, in my regard,
Abhorrent, and our country's character
Defaced by our subscription to its terms!
If words have any meaning it incites
To sheer assassination; it proclaims
That any meeting Bonaparte may slay him;
And, whatso language the Allies now hold,
In that outburst, at least, was war declared.
The noble lord to-night would second it,
Would seem to urge that we full arm, then wait

For just as long, no longer, than would serve
The preparations of the other Powers,
And then—pounce down on France!

CASTLEREAGH

No, no! Not so.

WHITBREAD

Good God, then, what are we to understand?—
However, this denial is a gain,
And my misapprehension owes its birth
Entirely to that mystery of phrase
Which taints all rhetoric of the noble lord.
Well, what is urged for new aggression now,
To vamp up and replace the Bourbon line?
One of the wittiest men who ever sat here[1]
Said half our nation's debt had been incurred
In efforts to suppress the Bourbon power,
The other half in efforts to restore it, (laughter)
And I must deprecate a further plunge
For ends so futile! Why, since Ministers
Craved peace with Bonaparte at Châtillon,
Should they refuse him peace and quiet now?
This brief amendment therefore I submit
To limit Ministers' aggressiveness
And make self-safety all their chartering:
"We at the same time earnestly implore
That the Prince Regent graciously induce
Strenuous endeavours in the cause of peace,
So long as it be done consistently
With the due honour of the English crown."

(Cheers.)

CASTLEREAGH

The arguments of Members opposite
Posit conditions which experience proves
But figments of a dream;—that honesty,

[1] Sheridan.

Truth, and good faith in this same Bonaparte
May be assumed and can be acted on:
This of one who is loud to violate
Bonds the most sacred, treaties the most grave! . . .
It follows not that since this realm was won
To treat with Bonaparte at Châtillon,
It can treat now. And as for assassination,
The sentiments outspoken here to-night
Are much more like to urge to desperate deeds
Against the persons of our good Allies,
Than are, against Napoléon, statements signed
By the Vienna plenipotentiaries!
We are, in fine, but too well warranted
On moral grounds to strike at Bonaparte,
If we at any crisis reckon it
Expedient so to do. The Government
Will act throughout in concert with the Allies,
And Ministers are well within their rights
To claim that their responsibility
Be not disturbed by hackneyed forms of speech ("Oh, oh")
Upon war's horrors, and the bliss of peace,—
Which none denies! (Cheers.)

PONSONBY

I ask the noble lord
If that his meaning and pronouncement be
Immediate war?

CASTLEREAGH

I have not phrased it so.

OPPOSITION CRIES

The question is unanswered!

There are excited calls, and the House divides. The result is announced as thirty-seven for WHITBREAD'S amendment, and against it two hundred and twenty.

The clock strikes twelve as the House adjourns.

SCENE VI

WESSEX. DURNOVER GREEN, CASTERBRIDGE

On a patch of green grass on Durnover Hill, in the purlieus of Casterbridge, a rough gallows has been erected, and an effigy of NAPOLÉON hung upon it. Under the effigy are faggots of brushwood.

It is the dusk of a spring evening, and a great crowd has gathered, comprising male and female inhabitants of the Durnover suburb, and villagers from distances of many miles. Also are present some of the county yeomanry in white leather breeches and scarlet, volunteers in scarlet with green facings, and the REVEREND MR. PALMER, vicar of the parish, leaning against the post of his garden door, and smoking a clay pipe of preternatural length. Also PRIVATE CANTLE from Egdon Heath, and SOLOMON LONGWAYS of Casterbridge. The Durnover band, which includes a clarionet, serpent, oboe, tambourine, cymbals, and drum, is playing "Lord Wellington's Hornpipe." The soldiers have been riddling the effigy with balls.

A rustic enters at a furious pace by the eastern road, in shirt sleeves, with his smock-frock on his arm.

RUSTIC (wiping his face)

Says I, please God I'll lose a quarter to zee he burned! And I left Stourcastle at dree o'clock to a minute. And if I'd known that I should be too late to zee the beginning on't, I'd have lost a half to be a bit sooner.

YEOMAN

Oh, you be soon enough good-now. He's just going to be lighted.

RUSTIC

But shall I zee en die? I wanted to zee if he'd die hard.

YEOMAN

Why, you don't suppose that Boney himself is to be burned here?

RUSTIC

What—not Boney that's to be burned?

A WOMAN

Why, bless the poor man, no! This is only a mommet they've made of him, that's got neither chine nor chitlings. His innerds be only a lock of straw from Bridle's barton.

LONGWAYS

He's made, neighbour, of a' old cast jacket and breeches from our barracks here. Likeways Grammer Pawle gave us Cap'n Megg's old Zunday shirt that she'd saved for tinder-box linnit; and Keeper Tricksey of Mellstock emptied his powder-horn into a barm-bladder, to make his heart wi'.

RUSTIC (vehemently)

Then there's no honesty left in Wessex folk nowadays at all! "Boney's going to be burned on Durnover Green to-night,"—that was what a pa'cel of chaps said to me out Stourcastle way, and I thought, to be sure I did, that he'd been catched sailing from his islant and landed at Budmouth and brought to Casterbridge Jail, the natural retreat of malefactors! —False deceivers—making me lose a quarter who can ill afford it; and all for nothing!

LONGWAYS

'Tisn't a mo'sel o' good for thee to cry out against Wessex folk, when 'twas all thy own stunpoll ignorance.

The VICAR OF DURNOVER removes his pipe and spits perpendicularly.

VICAR

My dear misguided man, you don't imagine that

we should be so inhuman in this Christian country as to burn a fellow-creature alive?

RUSTIC

Faith, I won't say I didn't! Durnover folk have never had the highest of Christian characters, come to that. And I didn't know but that even a pa'son might backslide to such things in these gory times—I won't say on a Zunday, but on a week-night like this—when we think what a blasphemious rascal he is, and that there's not a more charnel-minded villain towards womenfolk in the whole world.

The effigy has by this time been kindled, and they watch it burn, the flames making the faces of the crowd brass-bright, and lighting the grey tower of Durnover Church hard by.

WOMAN (singing)

Bayonets and firelocks!
I wouldn't my mammy should know't,
But I've been kissed in a sentry-box,
Wrapped up in a soldier's coat!

PRIVATE CANTLE

Talk of backsliding to burn Boney, I can backslide to anything when my blood is up, or rise to anything, thank God for't! Why, I shouldn't mind fighting Boney single-handed, if so be I had the choice o' weapons, and fresh Rainbarrow flints in my flint-box, and could get at him downhill. Yes, I'm a dangerous hand with a pistol now and then! . . . Hark, what's that? (A horn is heard eastward on the London Road.) Ah, here comes the mail. Now we may learn something. Nothing boldens my nerves like news of slaughter!

Enter mail-coach and steaming horses. It halts for a minute while the wheel is skidded and the horses stale.

SEVERAL

What was the latest news from abroad, guard, when you left Piccadilly White-Horse-Cellar?

GUARD

You have heard, I suppose, that he's given up to public vengeance, by Gover'ment orders? Anybody may take his life in any way, fair or foul, and no questions asked. But Marshal Ney, who was sent to fight him, flung his arms round his neck and joined him with all his men. Next, the telegraph from Plymouth sends news landed there by *The Sparrow*, that he has reached Paris, and King Louis has fled. But the air got hazy before the telegraph had finished, and the name of the place he had fled to couldn't be made out.

The VICAR OF DURNOVER blows a cloud of smoke, and again spits perpendicularly.

VICAR

Well, I'm d—— Dear me—dear me! The Lord's will be done.

GUARD

And there are to be four armies sent against him—English, Proosian, Austrian, and Roosian: the first two under Wellington and Blücher. And just as we left London a show was opened of Boney on horseback as large as life, hung up with his head downwards. Admission one shilling; children half-price. A truly patriot spectacle!—Not that yours here is bad for a simple country-place.

The coach drives on down the hill, and the crowd reflectively watches the burning.

WOMAN (singing)

I

My Love's gone a-fighting
  Where war-trumpets call,
The wrongs o' men righting
  Wi' carbine and ball,
And sabre for smiting,
  And charger, and all!

II

Of whom does he think there
  Where war-trumpets call?
To whom does he drink there,
  Wi' carbine and ball
On battle's red brink there,
  And charger, and all?

III

Her, whose voice he hears humming
  Where war-trumpets call,
"I wait, Love, thy coming
  Wi' carbine and ball,
And bandsmen a-drumming
  Thee, charger and all!"

The flames reach the powder in the effigy, which is blown to rags. The band marches off playing "When War's Alarms," the crowd disperses, the vicar stands musing and smoking at his garden door till the fire goes out and darkness curtains the scene.

ACT SIXTH

SCENE I

THE BELGIAN FRONTIER

The village of Beaumont stands in the centre foreground of a bird's-eye prospect across the Belgian frontier from the French side, being close to the frontier on the Belgian side. A vast forest recedes from it towards the river Sambre further back in the scene, which pursues a crinkled course between high banks from Maubeuge on the left to Charleroi on the right.

In the shadows that muffle all objects, innumerable bodies of infantry and cavalry are discerned bivouacking in and around the village. This mass of men forms the central column of NAPOLÉON'S army.

The right column is seen at a distance on that hand, also near the frontier, on the road leading towards Charleroi; and the left column by Solre-sur-Sambre, where the frontier and the river nearly coincide.

The obscurity thins and the June dawn appears.

DUMB SHOW

The bivouacs of the central column become broken up, and a movement ensues rightwards on Charleroi. The twelve regiments of cavalry which are in advance move off first; in half an hour more bodies move, and more in the next half-hour, till by eight o'clock the whole central army is gliding on. It defiles in strands by narrow tracks through the forest. Riding impatiently on the outskirts of the columns is MARSHAL NEY, who has as yet received no command.

As the day develops, sights and sounds to the left and right reveal that the two outside columns have also started, and are creeping towards the frontier abreast with the centre. That the whole forms one great movement, co-ordinated by one mind, now becomes apparent. Preceded by scouts the three columns converge.

The advance through dense woods by narrow paths takes time.

The head of the middle and main column forces back some outposts, and reaches Charleroi, driving out the Prussian general ZIETEN. It seizes the bridge over the Sambre and blows up the gates of the town.

The point of observation now descends close to the scene.

In the midst comes the EMPEROR with the Sappers of the Guard, the Marines, and the Young Guard. The clatter brings the scared inhabitants to their doors and windows. Cheers arise from some of them as NAPOLÉON passes up the steep street. Just beyond the town, in front of the Bellevue Inn, he dismounts. A chair is brought out, in which he sits and surveys the whole valley of the Sambre. The troops march past cheering him, and drums roll and bugles blow. Soon the EMPEROR is found to be asleep.

When the rattle of their passing ceases the silence wakes him. His listless eye falls upon a half-defaced poster on a wall opposite—the Declaration of the Allies.

NAPOLÉON (reading)

". . . Bonaparte destroys the only legal title on which his existence depended. . . . He has deprived himself of the protection of the law, and has manifested to the Universe that there can be neither peace nor truce with him. The Powers consequently declare that Napoléon Bonaparte has placed himself without the pale of civil and social relations, and that as an enemy and disturber of the tranquillity of the world he has rendered himself liable to public vengeance."

His flesh quivers, and he turns with a start, as if fancying that some one may be about to stab him in the back. Then he rises, mounts, and rides on.

Meanwhile the right column crosses the Sambre without difficulty at Châtelet, a little lower down; the left column at Marchienne a little higher up; and the three limbs combine into one vast army.

As the curtain of the mist is falling, the point of vision soars again, and there is afforded a brief glimpse of what is doing far away on the other side. From all parts of Europe long and sinister black files are crawling hitherward in serpentine lines, like slowworms through grass. They are the advancing armies of the Allies. The Dumb Show ends.

SCENE II

A BALLROOM IN BRUSSELS[1]

It is a June midnight at the DUKE AND DUCHESS OF RICHMOND'S. A band of stringed instruments shows in the background. The room is crowded with a brilliant assemblage of more than two hundred of the distinguished people sojourning in the city on account of the war and other reasons, and of local personages of State and fashion. The ball has opened with "The White Cockade."

Among those discovered present either dancing or looking on are the DUKE and DUCHESS as host and hostess, their son and eldest daughter, the Duchess's brother, the DUKE OF WELLINGTON, the PRINCE OF ORANGE, the DUKE OF BRUNSWICK, BARON VAN CAPELLEN the Belgian Secretary of State, the DUKE OF ARENBERG, the MAYOR OF BRUSSELS, the DUKE AND DUCHESS OF BEAUFORT, GENERAL ALAVA, GENERAL OUDENARDE, LORD HILL, LORD AND LADY CONYNGHAM, SIR HENRY AND LADY SUSAN CLINTON, SIR H. AND LADY HAMILTON DALRYMPLE, SIR WILLIAM AND LADY DE LANCEY, LORD UXBRIDGE, SIR JOHN BYNG, LORD PORTARLINGTON, LORD EDWARD SOMERSET, LORD HAY, COLONEL ABERCROMBY, SIR HUSSEY VIVIAN, SIR A. GORDON, SIR W. PONSONBY, SIR DENIS PACK, SIR JAMES KEMPT, SIR THOMAS PICTON, GENERAL MAITLAND, COLONEL CAMERON, many other officers, English, Hanoverian, Dutch, and Belgian, ladies English and foreign, and Scotch reel-dancers from Highland regiments.

The "Hungarian Waltz" having also been danced, the hostess calls up the Highland soldiers to show the foreign guests what a Scotch reel is like. The men put their hands on their hips and tread it out briskly. While they stand aside and rest "The Hanoverian Dance" is called.

Enter LIEUTENANT WEBSTER, A.D.C. to the PRINCE OF ORANGE. The Prince goes apart with him and receives a dispatch. After reading it he speaks to WELLINGTON, and the two, accompanied by the DUKE OF RICHMOND, retire into an alcove with serious faces.

[1] This famous ball has become so embedded in the history of the Hundred Days as to be an integral part of it. Yet in spite of the efforts that have been made to locate the room which saw the memorable gathering (by the present writer more than thirty years back, among other enthusiasts), a dispassionate judgment must deny that its site has as yet been proven. Even Sir W. Fraser is not convincing. The event happened less than a century ago, but the spot is almost as phantasmal in its elusive mystery as towered Camelot, the palace of Priam, or the hill of Calvary.

WEBSTER, in passing back across the ballroom, exchanges a hasty word with two or three of the guests known to him, a young officer among them, and goes out.

YOUNG OFFICER (to partner)

The French have passed the Sambre at Charleroi!

PARTNER

What—does it mean that Bonaparte indeed
Is bearing down upon us?

YOUNG OFFICER

That is so.
The one who spoke to me in passing out
Is Aide to the Prince of Orange, bringing him
Dispatches from Rebecque, his chief of Staff,
Now at the front, not far from Braine le Comte;
He says that Ney, leading the French van-guard,
Has burst on Quatre-Bras.

PARTNER

O horrid time!
Will you, then, have to go and face them there?

YOUNG OFFICER

I shall, of course, sweet. Promptly too, no doubt.

(He gazes about the room.)

See—the news spreads; the dance is paralyzed.
They are all whispering round. (The band stops.) Here comes one more,
He's the attaché from the Prussian force
At our headquarters.

Enter GENERAL MÜFFLING. He looks prepossessed, and goes straight to WELLINGTON and RICHMOND in the alcove, who by this time have been joined by the DUKE OF BRUNSWICK.

SEVERAL GUESTS (at back of room)

Yes, you see, it's true!
The army will prepare to march this dawn.

PICTON (to another general)

I am damn glad we are to be off. Pottering about here pinned to petticoat tails—it does one no good, but blasted harm!

ANOTHER GUEST

The ball cannot go on, can it? Didn't the Duke know the French were so near? If he did, how could he let us run risks so coolly?

LADY HAMILTON DALRYMPLE (to partner)

A deep concern weights those responsible
Who gather in the alcove. Wellington
Affects a cheerfulness in outward port,
But cannot rout his real anxiety!

The DUCHESS OF RICHMOND goes to her husband.

DUCHESS

Ought I to stop the ball? It hardly seems right to let it continue if all be true.

RICHMOND

I have put that very question to Wellington, my dear. He says that we need not hurry off the guests. The men have to assemble some time before the officers, who can stay on here a little longer without inconvenience; and he would prefer that they should, not to create a panic in the city, where the friends and spies of Napoléon are all agog for some such thing, which they would instantly communicate to him to take advantage of.

DUCHESS

Is it safe to stay on? Should we not be thinking about getting the children away?

RICHMOND

There's no hurry at all, even if Bonaparte were really sure to enter. But he's never going to set foot in Brussels—don't you imagine it for a moment.

DUCHESS (anxiously)

I hope not. But I wish we had never brought them here!

RICHMOND

It is too late, my dear, to wish that now. Don't be flurried; make the people go on dancing.

The DUCHESS returns to her guests. The DUKE rejoins WELLINGTON, BRUNSWICK, MÜFFLING, and the PRINCE OF ORANGE in the alcove.

WELLINGTON

We need not be astride till five o'clock
If all the men are marshalled well ahead.
The Brussels citizens must not suppose
They stand in serious peril. . . . He, I think,
Directs his main attack mistakenly;
It should have been through Mons, not Charleroi.

MÜFFLING

The Austrian armies, and the Russian too,
Will show nowhere in this. The thing that's done,
Be it a historied feat or nine days' fizz,
Will be done long before they join us here.

WELLINGTON

Yes, faith; and 'tis a pity. But, by God,
Blücher, I think, and I can make a shift
To do the business without troubling 'em!
Though I've an infamous army, that's the truth,—
Weak, and but ill-equipped,—and what's as bad,
A damned unpractised staff!

MÜFFLING

We'll hope for luck.
For certain Blücher concentrates by now
Near Ligny, as he says in his dispatch.
Your Grace, I glean, will mass at Quatre-Bras?

WELLINGTON

Ay, now we are sure this move on Charleroi
Is no mere feint. Though I had meant Nivelles. . . .
Have ye a good map, Richmond, near at hand?

RICHMOND

In the next room there's one. (Exit RICHMOND.)

WELLINGTON calls up various general officers and aides from other parts of the room. PICTON, UXBRIDGE, HILL, CLINTON, VIVIAN, MAITLAND, PONSONBY, SOMERSET, and others join him in succession, receive orders, and go out severally.

PRINCE OF ORANGE

As my divisions seem to lie around
The probable point of impact, it behoves me
To start at once, Duke, for Genappe, I deem?
Being in Brussels, all for this damned ball,
The dispositions out there have, so far,
Been made by young Saxe Weimar and Perponcher,
On their own judgment quite. I go, your Grace?

WELLINGTON

Yes, certainly. 'Tis now desirable.
Farewell! Good luck, until we meet again,
The battle won!

[Exit PRINCE OF ORANGE, and, shortly after, MÜFFLING.

RICHMOND returns with a map, which he spreads out on the table. WELLINGTON scans it closely.

Napoléon has befooled me,
By God he has,—gained four-and-twenty hours'
Good march upon me!

RICHMOND

What do you mean to do?

WELLINGTON

I have bidden the army concentrate in strength
At Quatre-Bras. But we shan't stop him there;
So I must fight him *here*.

(He marks Waterloo with his thumb-nail.)

Well, now I have sped
All necessary orders I may sup,
And then must say good-bye. (To Brunswick.) This very day
There will be fighting, Duke. You are fit to start?

BRUNSWICK (coming forward)

I leave almost this moment.—Yes, your Grace—
And I sheath not my sword till I have avenged
My father's death. I have sworn it!

WELLINGTON

My good friend,
Something too solemn knells beneath your words.

Take cheerful views of the affair in hand,
And fall to't with *sang froid*!

BRUNSWICK

But I have sworn!
Adieu. The rendezvous is Quatre-Bras?

WELLINGTON

Just so. The order is unchanged. Adieu;
But only till a later hour to-day;
I see it is one o'clock.

WELLINGTON and RICHMOND go out of the alcove and join the hostess, BRUNSWICK's black figure being left there alone. He bends over the map for a few seconds.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

O Brunswick, Duke of Deathwounds! Even as he
For whom thou wear'st that filial weedery
Was waylaid by my tipstaff nine years since,
So thou this day shalt feel his fendless tap,
And join thy sire!

BRUNSWICK (starting up)

I am stirred by inner words,
As 'twere my father's angel calling me,—
That prelude to our death my lineage know!

He stands in a reverie for a moment; then, bidding adieu to the DUCHESS OF RICHMOND and her daughter, goes slowly out of the ballroom by a side-door.

DUCHESS

The Duke of Brunswick bore him gravely here.
His sable shape has struck me all the eve
As one of those romantic presences
We hear of—seldom see.

WELLINGTON (phlegmatically)

Romantic,—well,
It may be so. Times often, ever since
The late Duke's death, his mood has tinged him thus.
He is of those brave men who danger see,
And seeing front it,—not of those, less brave
But counted more, who face it sightlessly.

YOUNG OFFICER (to partner)

The Generals slip away! I, Love, must take
The cobbled highway soon. Some hours ago
The French seized Charleroi; so they loom nigh.

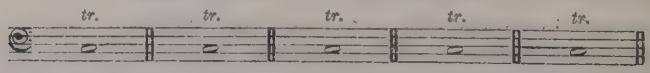
PARTNER (uneasily)

Which tells me that the hour you draw your sword
Looms nigh us likewise!

YOUNG OFFICER

Some are saying here
We fight this very day. Rumours all-shaped
Fly round like cockchafers!

Suddenly there echoes into the ballroom a long-drawn metallic purl of sound, making all the company start:



Ah—there it is,
Just as I thought! They are beating the Générale.

The loud roll of side-drums is taken up by other drums further and further away, till the hollow noise spreads all over the city. Dismay is written on the faces of the women. The Highland non-commissioned officers and privates march smartly down the ballroom and disappear.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Discerned you stepping out in front of them
That figure—of a pale drum-major kind,
Or fugleman—who wore a cold grimace?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

He was my old friend Death, in rarest trim,
The occasion favouring his husbandry!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Are those who marched behind him, then, to fall?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Ay, all well-nigh, ere Time have houred three-score.

PARTNER

Surely this cruel call to instant war
Spares space for one dance more, that memory
May store when you are gone, while I—sad me!—
Wait, wait and weep. . . . Yes—one there is to be!

SPIRIT IRONIC

Methinks flirtation grows too tender here!

COUNTRY DANCE: "THE PRIME OF LIFE"[1]

The sense of looming tragedy carries emotion to its climax. All the younger officers stand up with their partners, forming several figures of fifteen or twenty couples each. The air is ecstasizing, and both sexes abandon themselves to the movement.

Nearly half an hour passes before the figure is danced down. Smothered kisses follow the conclusion. The silence is broken from without by more long hollow rolling notes, so near that they thrill the window-panes.

[1] A favourite figure at this period.

SEVERAL

'Tis the Assemble. Now, then, we must go!

The officers bid farewell to their partners and begin leaving in twos and threes. When they are gone the women mope and murmur to each other by the wall, and listen to the tramp of men and slamming of doors in the streets without.

LADY HAMILTON DALRYMPLE

The Duke has borne him gaily here to-night.
The youngest spirits scarcely capped his own.

DALRYMPLE

Maybe that, finding himself blade to blade
With Bonaparte at last, his blood gets quick.
French lancers of the Guard were seen at Frasnes
Last midnight; so the clash is not far off.

[They leave.

DE LANCEY (to his wife)

I take you to our door, and say good-bye,
And go thence to the Duke's and wait for him.
In a few hours we shall be all in motion
Towards the scene of—what we cannot tell!
You, dear, will haste to Antwerp till it's past,
As we have arranged.

[They leave.

WELLINGTON (to Richmond)

Now I must also go,
And snatch a little snooze ere harnessing.
The Prince and Brunswick have been gone some while.

RICHMOND walks to the door with him. Exit WELLINGTON. RICHMOND returns.

DUCHESS (to Richmond)

Some of these left renew the dance, you see.
I cannot stop them; but with memory hot
Of those late gone, of where they are gone, and why,
It smacks of heartlessness!

RICHMOND

Let be; let be;
Youth comes not twice to fleet mortality!

The dancing, however, is fitful and spiritless, few but civilian partners being left for the ladies. Many of the latter prefer to sit in reverie while waiting for their carriages.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

When those stout men-at-arms drew doorward there,
I saw a like grimacing shadow march
And pirouette before no few of them.
Some of themselves beheld it; some were blind.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Which were so ushered?

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Brunswick, who saw and knew;
One also moved before Sir Thomas Picton,
Who coolly conned and drily spoke to it;
Another danced in front of Ponsonby,
Who failed of heeding his.—De Lancey, Hay,
Gordon, and Cameron, and many more
Were footmanned by like phantoms from the ball.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Multiplied shimmerings of my Protean friend,
Who means to couch them shortly. Thou wilt eye
Many fantastic moulds of him ere long,
Such as, bethink thee, thou hast eyed before.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

I have—too often!

The attenuated dance dies out, the remaining guests depart, the musicians leave the gallery and depart also. RICHMOND goes to a window and pulls back one of the curtains. Dawn is barely visible in the sky, and the lamps indistinctly reveal that long lines of British infantry have assembled in the street. In the irksomeness of waiting for their officers with marching-orders, they have lain down on the pavements, where many are soundly sleeping, their heads on their knapsacks and their arms by their side.

DUCHESS

Poor men. Sleep waylays them. How tired they seem!

RICHMOND

They'll be more tired before the day is done.
A march of eighteen miles beneath the heat,
And then to fight a battle ere they rest,
Is what foreshades.—Well, it is more than bed-time;
But little sleep for us or any one
To-night in Brussels!

He draws the window-curtain and goes out with the DUCHESS. Servants enter and extinguish candles. The scene closes in darkness.

SCENE III

CHARLEROI. NAPOLÉON'S QUARTERS

The same midnight. NAPOLÉON is lying on a bed in his clothes. In consultation with SOULT, his Chief of Staff, who is sitting near, he dictates to his Secretary orders for the morrow. They are addressed to KELLERMANN, DROUOT, LOBAU, GÉRARD, and other of his marshals. SOULT goes out to dispatch them.

The Secretary resumes the reading of reports. Presently MARSHAL NEY is announced. He is heard stumbling up the stairs, and enters.

NAPOLÉON

Ah, Ney; why come you back? Have you secured
The all-important Crossways?—safely sconced
Yourself at Quatre-Bras?

NEY

Not, sire, as yet.
For, marching forwards, I heard gunnery boom,
And, fearing that the Prussians had engaged you,
I stood at pause. Just then——

NAPOLÉON

My charge was this:
Make it impossible at any cost
That Wellington and Blücher should unite.
As it's from Brussels that the English come,
And from Namur the Prussians, Quatre-Bras
Lends it alone for their forgathering:
So, why exists it if not in your hands?

NEY

My reason, sire, was rolling from my tongue.—
Hard on the boom of guns, dim files of foot
Which read to me like massing Englishry—
The vanguard of all Wellington's array—
I half-discerned. So, in pure wariness,
I left the Bachelu columns there at Frasnes,
And hastened back to tell you.

NAPOLÉON

Ney; O Ney!
I fear you are not the man that once you were;
Of yore so daring, such a faint-heart now!
I have ground to know the foot that flustered you
Were but a few stray groups of Netherlanders;

For my good spies in Brussels send me cue
That up to now the English have not stirred,
But cloy themselves with nightly revel there.

NEY (bitterly)

Give me another opportunity
Before you speak like that!

NAPOLÉON

You soon will have one! . . .
But now—no more of this. I have other glooms
Upon my soul—the much-disquieting news
That Bourmont has deserted to our foes
With his whole staff.

NEY

We can afford to let him.

NAPOLÉON

It is what such betokens, not their worth,
That whets it! . . . Love, respect for me, have waned;
But I will right that. We've good chances still.
You must return foot-fleet to Quatre-Bras;
There Kellermann's cuirassiers will promptly join you
To bear the English backward Brussels way.
I go on towards Fleurus and Ligny now.—
If Blücher's force retreat, and Wellington's
Lie somnolent in Brussels one day more,
I snare that city sans a single shot! . . .
Now, friend, downstairs you'll find some supper ready,
Which you must tuck in sharply, and then off.
The past day has not ill-advantaged us;
We have stalked upon the two chiefs unawares,
And in such sites that they must fight apart.
Now for a two hours' rest.—Comrade, adieu
Until to-morrow!

NEY

Till to-morrow, sire!

[Exit NEY.

NAPOLÉON falls asleep, and the Secretary waits till dictation shall be resumed. BUSSY, the orderly officer, comes to the door.

BUSSY

Letters—arrived from Paris. (Hands letters.)

SECRETARY

He shall have them
The moment he awakes. These eighteen hours
He's been astride; and is not what he was.—
Much news from Paris?

BUSSY

I can only say
What's not the news. The courier has just told me
He'd nothing from the Empress at Vienna
To bring his Majesty. She writes no more.

SECRETARY

And never will again! In my regard
That bird's forsook its nest for good and all.

BUSSY

All that they hear in Paris from her court
Is through our spies there. One of them reports
This rumour of her: that the Archduke John,
In taking leave to join our enemies here,
Said, "O, my poor Louise; I am grieved for you,
And what I hope is, that he'll be run through,
Or shot, or break his neck, for your own good
No less than ours."

NAPOLÉON (waking)

By "he" denoting me?

BUSSY (starting)

Just so, your Majesty.

NAPOLÉON (peremptorily)

What said the Empress?

BUSSY

She gave no answer, sire, that rumour bears.

NAPOLÉON

Count Neipperg, whom they have made her chamberlain,
Interred his wife last spring—is it not so?

BUSSY

He did, your Majesty.

NAPOLÉON

H'm. . . . You may go.

[Exit BUSSY.

The Secretary reads letters aloud in succession. He comes to the last; begins it; reaches a phrase, and stops abruptly.

Mind not! Read on. No doubt the usual threat,
Or prophecy, from some mad scribe? Who signs it?

SECRETARY

The subscript is "The Duke of Enghien!"

NAPOLÉON (starting up)

Bah, man! A treacherous trick! A hoax—no more!
Is that the last?

SECRETARY

The last, your Majesty.

NAPOLÉON

Then now I'll sleep. In two hours have me called.

SECRETARY

I'll give the order, sire.

[The Secretary goes.

The candles are removed, except one, and NAPOLÉON endeavours to compose himself.

SPIRIT IRONIC

A little moral panorama would do him no harm, after that reminder of the Duke of Enghien. Shall it be, young Compassion?

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

What good—if that old Years tells us be true?
But I say naught. To ordain is not for me!

Thereupon a vision passes before NAPOLÉON as he lies, comprising hundreds of thousands of skeletons and corpses in various stages of decay. They rise from his various battlefields, the flesh dropping from them, and gaze reproachfully at him. His intimate officers who have been slain he recognizes among the crowd. In front is the DUKE OF ENGHIEN as showman.

NAPOLÉON (in his sleep)

Why, why should this reproach be dealt me now?
Why hold me my own master, if I be
Ruled by the pitiless Planet of Destiny?

He jumps up in a sweat and puts out the last candle; and the scene is curtained by darkness.

SCENE IV

A CHAMBER OVERLOOKING A MAIN STREET IN BRUSSELS

A June sunrise; the beams struggling through the window-curtains. A canopied bed in a recess on the left. The quick notes of "Brighton Camp, or the Girl I've left behind me," strike sharply into the room from fifes and drums without. A young lady in a dressing-gown, who has evidently been awaiting the sound, springs from the bed like a hare from its form, undraws the window-curtains and opens the window.

Columns of British soldiery are marching past from the Parc southward out of the city by the Namur Gate. The windows of other houses in the street rattle open, and become full of gazers.

A tap at the door. An older lady enters, and comes up to the first.

YOUNGER LADY (turning)

O mamma—I didn't hear you!

ELDER LADY

I was sound asleep till the thumping of the drums set me fantastically dreaming, and when I awoke I found they were real. Did they wake you too, my dear?

YOUNGER LADY (reluctantly)

I didn't require waking. I hadn't slept since we came home.

ELDER LADY

That was from the excitement of the ball. There are dark rings round your eyes. (The fifes and drums are now opposite, and thrill the air in the room.) Ah—that "Girl I've left behind me!"—which so many thousands of women have throbbed an accompaniment to, and will again to-day if ever they did!

YOUNGER LADY (her voice faltering)

It is rather cruel to say that just now, mamma. There, I can't look at them after it! (She turns and wipes her eyes.)

ELDER LADY

I wasn't thinking of ourselves—certainly not of you.—How they press on—with those great knapsacks and firelocks and, I am told, fifty-six rounds of ball-cartridge, and four days' provisions in those haversacks. How can they carry it all near twenty miles and fight with it on their shoulders! . . . Don't cry, dear. I thought you would get sentimental last night over somebody. I ought to have brought you home sooner. How many dances did you have? It was impossible for me to look after you in the excitement of the war-tidings.

YOUNGER LADY

Only three—four.

ELDER LADY

Which were they?

YOUNGER LADY

"Enrico," the "Copenhagen Waltz" and the "Hanoverian," and the "Prime of Life."

ELDER LADY

It was very foolish to fall in love on the strength of four dances.

YOUNGER LADY (evasively)

Fall in love? Who said I had fallen in love? What a funny idea!

ELDER LADY

Is it? . . . Now here come the Highland Brigade with their pipes and their "Hieland Laddie." How the sweethearts cling to the men's arms. (Reaching forward.) There are more regiments following. But look, that gentleman at the opposite window knows us. I cannot remember his name. (She bows and calls across.) Sir, which are these?

GENTLEMAN OPPOSITE

The Ninety-second. Next come the Forty-ninth, and next the Forty-second—Sir Denis Pack's brigade.

ELDER LADY

Thank you.—I think it is that gentleman we talked to at the Duchess's, but I am not sure. (A pause: another band.)

GENTLEMAN OPPOSITE

That's the Twenty-eighth. (They pass, with their band and colours.) Now the Thirty-second are coming up—part of Kempt's brigade. Endless, are they not!

ELDER LADY

Yes, Sir. Has the Duke passed out yet?

GENTLEMAN OPPOSITE

Not yet. Some cavalry will go by first, I think. The foot coming up now are the Seventy-ninth. (They pass.) . . . These next are the Ninety-fifth. (They pass.) . . . These are the First Foot-guards. (They pass, playing "British Grenadiers.") . . . The Fusileer-guards now. (They pass.) . . . Now the Coldstreamers. (They pass. He looks up towards the Parc.) Several Hanoverian regiments under Colonel Best are coming next. (They pass, with their bands and colours. An interval.)

ELDER LADY (to daughter)

Here are the hussars. How much more they carry to battle than at reviews. The hay in those great nets must encumber them. (She turns and sees that her daughter has become pale.) Ah, now I know! *He* has just gone by. You exchanged signals with him, you wicked girl! How do you know what his character is, or if he'll ever come back?

The younger lady goes and flings herself on her face upon the bed, sobbing silently. Her mother glances at her, but leaves her alone. An interval. The prancing of a group of horsemen is heard on the cobble-stones without.

GENTLEMAN OPPOSITE (calling)

Here comes the Duke!

ELDER LADY (to younger)

You have left the window at the most important time! The Duke of Wellington and his staff-officers are passing out.

YOUNGER LADY

I don't want to see him. I don't want to see anything any more!

Riding down the street comes WELLINGTON in a grey frock-coat and small cocked hat, frigid and undemonstrative; accompanied by four or five Generals of his suite, the Deputy Quartermaster-general DE LANCEY, LORD FITZROY SOMERSET, Aide-de-camp, and GENERAL MÜFFLING.

GENTLEMAN OPPOSITE

He is the Prussian officer attached to our headquarters, through whom Wellington communicates with Blücher, who, they say, is threatened by the French at Ligny at this moment.

The elder lady turns to her daughter, and going to the bed bends over her, while the horses' tramp of WELLINGTON and his staff

clatters more faintly in the street, and the music of the last retreating band dies away towards the Forest of Soignes.

Finding that her daughter is hysterical with grief she quickly draws the window-curtains to screen the room from the houses opposite. Scene ends.

SCENE V

THE FIELD OF LIGNY

The same day later. A prospect of the battlefield of Ligny southward from the roof of the windmill of Bussy, which stands at the centre and highest point of the Prussian position, about six miles south-east of Quatre-Bras.

The ground slopes downward along the whole front of the scene to a valley through which wanders the Ligne, a muddy stream bordered by sallows. On both sides of the stream, in the middle plane of the picture, stands the village of Ligny, composed of thatched cottages, gardens, and farm-houses with stone walls; the main features, such as the church, churchyard, and village-green being on the further side of the Ligne.

On that side the land reascends in green wheatfields to an elevation somewhat greater than that of the foreground, reaching away to Fleurus in the right-hand distance.

In front, on the slopes between the spectator and the village, is the First Corps of the Prussian army commanded by ZIETEN, its First Brigade under STEINMETZ occupying the most salient point. The Corps under THIELMANN is ranged to the left, and that of PIRCH to the rear, in reserve to ZIETEN. In the centre-front, just under the mill, BLÜCHER on a fine grey charger is intently watching, with his staff.

Something dark is seen to be advancing over the horizon by Fleurus, about three miles off. It is the van of NAPOLÉON'S army, approaching to give battle.

At this moment hoofs are heard clattering along a road that passes behind the mill; and there come round to the front the DUKE OF WELLINGTON, his staff-officers, and a small escort of cavalry.

WELLINGTON and BLÜCHER greet each other at the foot of the windmill. They disappear inside, and can be heard ascending the ladders.

Enter on the roof WELLINGTON and BLÜCHER, followed by FITZROY SOMERSET, GNEISENAU, MÜFFLING, and others. Before renewing their conversation they peer through their glasses at the

dark movements on the horizon. WELLINGTON'S manner is deliberate, judicial, almost indifferent; BLÜCHER'S eager and impetuous.

WELLINGTON

They muster not as yet in near such strength
At Quatre-Bras as here.

BLÜCHER

'Tis from Fleurus
They come debouching. I, perforce, withdrew
My forward posts of cavalry at dawn
In face of their light cannon. . . . They'll be here,
I reckon, soon!

WELLINGTON (still with glass)

I clearly see his staff,
And if my eyes don't lie, the Arch-one too. . . .
It is the whole Imperial army, Prince,
That we've before us. (A silence.) Well, we'll cope with them!
What would you have me do?

BLÜCHER is so absorbed in what he sees that he does not heed.

GNEISENAU

Duke, this I'd say:
Events suggest to us that you come up
With all your force, behind the village here,
And act as our reserve.

MÜFFLING

But Bonaparte,
Pray note, has redistributed his strength
In fashion that you fail to recognize.
I am against your scheme.

BLÜCHER (lowering his glass)

Signs notify
Napoléon's plans are changed! He purports now
To strike our left—between Sombreffe and Brye. . . .
If so, I have to readjust my ward.

WELLINGTON

One of his two divisions that we scan
Outspreading from Fleurus, seems bent on Ligny,
The other on Saint-Amand.

BLÜCHER

Well, I shall see
In half an hour, your Grace. If what I deem
Be what he means, Von Zieten's corps forthwith
Must stand to their positions: Pirch out here,
Henckel at Ligny, Steinmetz at La Haye.

WELLINGTON

So that, your Excellency, as I opine,
I go and sling my strength on their left wing—
Manœuvring to outflank 'em on that side.

BLÜCHER

True, true. Our plan uncovers of itself;
You bear down everything from Quatre-Bras
Along the road to Frasnes.

WELLINGTON

I will, by God.
I'll bear straight on to Gosselies, if needs!

GNEISENAU

Your Excellencies, if I may be a judge,
Such movement will not tend to unity;

It leans too largely on a peradventure,
Most speculative in its contingencies!

A silence; till the officers of the staff remark to each other that concentration is best in any circumstances. A general discussion ensues.

BLÜCHER (concludingly)

We will expect you, Duke, to our support.

WELLINGTON

I must agree that, in the sum, it's best.
So be it then. If not attacked myself
I'll come to you.—Now I return with speed
To Quatre-Bras.

BLÜCHER

And I descend from here
To give close eye and thought to things below;
No more can well be studied where we stand.

Exeunt from roof WELLINGTON, BLÜCHER and the rest. They reappear below, and WELLINGTON and his suite gallop furiously away in the direction of Quatre-Bras.

An interval.

DUMB SHOW (below)

Three reports of a cannon give the signal for the French attack. NAPOLÉON'S army advances down the slopes of green corn opposite, bands and voices joining in songs of victory. The French come in three grand columns; VANDAMME'S on the left (the spectator's right) against Saint-Amand, the most forward angle of the Prussian position. GÉRARD'S in the centre bears down upon Ligny. GROUCHY'S on the French right is further back. Far to the rear can be discerned NAPOLÉON, the Imperial Guard, and MILHAUD'S cuirassiers halted in reserve.

This formidable advance is preceded by swarms of tirailleurs, who tread down the high wheat, exposing their own men in the rear.

Amid cannonading from both sides they draw nearer to the Prussians, though lanes are cut through them by the latter's guns. They drive the Prussians out of Ligny; who, however, rally in the houses, churchyard, and village green.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

I see an unnatural Monster, loosely jointed,
With an Apocalyptic Being's shape,
And limbs and eyes a hundred thousand strong,
And fifty thousand heads; which coils itself
About the buildings there.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Thou dost indeed.
It is the Monster Devastation. Watch.

Round the church they fight without quarter, shooting face to face, stabbing with unfixed bayonets, and braining with the butts of muskets. The village catches fire, and soon becomes a furnace. The crash of splitting timbers as doors are broken through, the curses of the fighters, rise into the air, with shouts of "En avant!" from the further side of the stream, and "Vorwärts!" from the nearer.

The battle extends to the west by Le Hameau and Saint-Amand la Haye; and Ligny becomes invisible under a shroud of smoke.

VOICES (at the base of the mill)

This sun will go down gorily for us!
The English, sharply sighed for by Prince Blücher,
Cannot appear. Wellington words across
That hosts have set on him at Quatre-Bras,
And leave him not one bayonet to spare!

The truth of this intelligence is apparent. A low dull sound heard lately from the direction of Quatre-Bras has increased to a roaring cannonade.

The scene abruptly closes.

SCENE VI

THE FIELD OF QUATRE-BRAS

The same day. The view is southward, and the straight gaunt highway from Brussels (behind the spectator) to Charleroi over the hills in front, bisects the picture from foreground to distance. Near in sight, where it is elevated and open, there crosses it obliquely, at a point called Les Quatre-Bras, another road which comes from Nivelle, five miles to the gazer's right rear, and goes to Namur, twenty miles ahead to the left. At a distance of five or six miles in this latter direction it passes near the previous scene, Ligny, whence the booming of guns can be continuously heard.

Between the cross-roads in the centre of the scene and the far horizon the ground dips into a hollow, on the other side of which the same straight road to Charleroi is seen climbing the crest, and over it till out of sight. From a hill on the right hand of the mid-distance a large wood, the wood of Bossu, reaches up nearly to the crossways, which give their name to the buildings thereat, consisting of a few farm-houses and an inn.

About three-quarters of a mile off, nearly hidden by the horizon towards Charleroi, there is also a farmstead, Gémioncourt; another, Piraumont, stands on an eminence a mile to the left of it, and somewhat in front of the Namur road.

DUMB SHOW

As this scene uncovers the battle is beheld to be raging at its height, and to have reached a keenly tragic phase. WELLINGTON has returned from Ligny, and the main British and Hanoverian position, held by the men who marched out of Brussels in the morning, under officers who danced the previous night at the Duchess's, is along the Namur road to the left of the perspective, and round the cross-road itself. That of the French, under NEY, is on the crests further back, from which they are descending in imposing numbers. Some advanced columns are assailing the English left, while through the smoke-hazes of the middle of the field two lines of skirmishers are seen firing at each other—the southernmost dark blue, the northernmost dull red. Time lapses till it is past four o'clock.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

The cannonade of the French ordnance-lines
Has now redoubled. New and denser packs

Of foot, supported by fleet cavalry,
Straightly impinge upon the Brunswick bands
That hug the tangled tree-clumps of Bossu. . . .
Above some regiments of the assaulting French
A flag like midnight swims upon the air,
To say no quarter may be looked for there!

The Brunswick soldiery, much notched and torn by the French grape-shot, now lie in heaps. The DUKE OF BRUNSWICK himself, desperate to keep them steady, lights his pipe, and rides slowly up and down in front of his lines previous to the charge which follows.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

The French have heaved them on the Brunswickers,
And borne them back. Now comes the Duke's told time.
He gallops at the head of his hussars—
Those men of solemn and appalling guise,
Full-clothed in black, with nodding hearsy plumes,
A shining silver skull and cross of bones
Set upon each, to byspeak his slain sire. . . .
Concordantly, the expected bullet starts
And finds the living son.

BRUNSWICK reels to the ground. His troops, disheartened, lose their courage and give way.

The French front columns, and the cavalry supporting them, shout as they advance. The Allies are forced back upon the English main position. WELLINGTON is in personal peril for a time, but he escapes it by a leap of his horse.

A curtain of smoke drops. An interval. The curtain reascends.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Behold again the Dynasts' gory gear!
Since we regarded, what has progressed here?

RECORDING ANGEL (in recitative)

Musters of English foot and their allies
Came palely panting by the Brussels way,

And, swiftly stationed, checked their counter-braves.
Ney, vexed by lack of like auxiliaries,
Bade then the columned cuirassiers to charge
In all their edged array of weaponcraft.
Yea; thrust replied to thrust, and fire to fire;
The English broke, till Picton prompt to prop them
Sprang with fresh foot-folk from the covering rye.
Next Piré's cavalry took up the charge. . . .
And so the action sways. The English left
Is turned at Piraumont; whilst on their right
Perils infest the greenwood of Bossu;
Wellington gazes round with dubious view;
England's long fame in fight seems sepulchred,
And ominous roars swell loudlier Ligny-ward.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

New rage has wrenched the battle since thou'st writ;
Hot-hasting succours of light cannonry
Lately come up, relieve the English stress;
Kellermann's cuirassiers, both man and horse
All plated over with the brass of war,
Are rolling on the highway. More brigades
Of British, soiled and sweltering, now are nigh,
Who plunge within the boscage of Bossu;
Where in the hidden shades and sinuous creeps
Life-struggles can be heard, seen but in peeps.
Therewith the foe's accessions harass Ney,
Racked that no needful d'Erlon darks the way!

Inch by inch NEY has to draw off: WELLINGTON promptly advances. At dusk NEY's army finds itself back at Frasnes, where he meets D'ERLON coming up to his assistance, too late.

The weary English and their allies, who have been on foot ever since one o'clock the previous morning, prepare to bivouac in front of the cross-roads. Their fires flash up for a while; and by and by the dead silence of heavy sleep hangs over them. WELLINGTON goes into his tent, and the night darkens.

A Prussian courier from Ligny enters, who is conducted into the tent to WELLINGTON.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

What tidings can a courier bring that count
Here, where such mighty things are native born?

RECORDING ANGEL (in recitative)

The fury of the tumult there begun
Scourged quivering Ligny through the afternoon:
Napoléon's great intent grew substantive,
And on the Prussian pith and pulse he bent
His foretimed blow. Blücher, to butt the shock,
Called up his last reserves, and heading on,
With blade high brandished by his aged arm,
Spurred forward his white steed. But they, outspent,
Failed far to follow. Darkness coped the sky,
And storm, and rain with thunder. Yet once more
He cheered them on to charge. His horse, the while,
Pierced by a bullet, fell on him it bore.
He, trampled, bruised, faint, and in disarray
Dragged to a new mount, and was led away.
His ragged lines withdraw from sight and sound,
And their assailants camp upon the ground.

The scene shuts with midnight.

SCENE VII

BRUSSELS. THE PLACE ROYALE

The same night, dark and sultry. A crowd of citizens throng the broad Place. They gaze continually down the Rue de Namur, along which arrive minute by minute carts and waggons laden with wounded men. Other wounded limp into the city on foot. At much greater speed enter fugitive soldiers from the miscellaneous contingents of WELLINGTON'S army at Quatre-Bras, who gesticulate and explain to the crowd that all is lost and that the French will soon be in Brussels.

Baggage-carts and carriages, with and without horses, stand before an hotel, surrounded by a medley of English and other foreign nobility and gentry with their valets and maids. Bulletins from the battlefield are affixed on the corner of the Place, and people peer at them by the dim oil lights.

A rattle of hoofs reaches the ears, entering the town by the same Namur gate. The riders disclose themselves to be Belgian hussars, also from the field.

SEVERAL HUSSARS

The French approach! Wellington is beaten. Bonaparte is at our heels.

Consternation reaches a crisis. Horses are hastily put-to at the hotel: people crowd into the carriages and try to drive off. They get jammed together and hemmed in by the throng. Unable to move they quarrel and curse despairingly in sundry tongues.

Enter the MAYOR OF BRUSSELS, the BARON CAPELLEN, the DUC D'URSEL, and officials.

BARON CAPELLEN

Affix the new bulletin. It is a more assuring one, and may quiet them a little.

A new bulletin is nailed over the old one.

MAYOR

Good people, calm yourselves. No victory has been won by Bonaparte. The noise of guns heard all the afternoon became fainter towards the end, showing beyond doubt that the retreat was away from the city.

A CITIZEN

The French are said to be forty thousand strong at Les Quatre-Bras, and no forty thousand British marched out against them this morning!

ANOTHER CITIZEN

And it is whispered that the city archives and the treasure-chest have been sent to Antwerp!

MAYOR

Only as a precaution. No good can be gained by panic. Sixty or seventy thousand of the Allies, all told, face Napoléon by this hour. Meanwhile who is to attend to the wounded that are being brought in faster and faster? Fellow-citizens, do your duty by these unfortunates, and believe me that when engaged in such an act of mercy no enemy will hurt you.

CITIZENS

What can we do?

MAYOR

I invite all those who have such, to bring mattresses, sheets, and coverlets to the Hôtel de Ville, also old linen and lint from the houses of the curés.

Many set out on this errand. An interval. Enter a courier, who speaks to the MAYOR and the BARON CAPELLEN.

BARON CAPELLEN (to Mayor)

Better inform them immediately, to prevent a panic.

MAYOR (to Citizens)

I grieve to tell you that the Duke of Brunswick, whom you saw ride out this morning, was killed this afternoon at Les Quatre-Bras. A musket-ball passed through his bridle-hand and entered his belly. His body is now arriving. Carry yourselves gravely.

A lane is formed in the crowd in the direction of the Rue de Namur; and they wait. Presently an extemporized funeral procession, with the body of the DUKE on a gun-carriage, and a small escort of Brunswickers with carbines reversed, comes slowly up the street, their silver death's-heads shining in the lamplight. The agitation of the citizens settles into a silent gloom as the mournful train passes.

MAYOR (to Baron Capellen)

I noticed the strange look of prepossession on his

face at the ball last night, as if he knew what was going to be.

BARON CAPELLEN

The Duchess mentioned it to me. . . . He hated the French, if any man ever did, and so did his father before him! Here comes the English Colonel Hamilton, straight from the field. He will give us trustworthy particulars.

Enter COLONEL HAMILTON by the Rue de Namur. He converses with the MAYOR and the BARON on the issue of the struggle.

MAYOR

Now I will go to the Hôtel de Ville, and get it ready for those wounded who can find no room in private houses.

[Exeunt MAYOR, CAPELLEN, D'URSEL, HAMILTON, etc. severally.

Many citizens descend in the direction of the Hôtel de Ville to assist. Those who remain silently watch the carts bringing in the wounded till a late hour. The doors of houses in the Place and elsewhere are kept open, and the rooms within lighted, in expectation of more arrivals from the field.

A courier gallops up, who is accosted by idlers.

COURIER (hastily)

The Prussians are defeated at Ligny by Napoléon in person. He will be here to-morrow.

[Exit courier.

FIRST IDLER

The devil! Then I am for welcoming him. No Antwerp for me!

OTHER IDLERS (sotto voce)

Vive l'Empereur!

A warm summer fog from the Lower Town covers the Parc and the Place Royale.

SCENE VIII

THE ROAD TO WATERLOO

The view is now from Quatre-Bras backward along the road by which the English arrived. Diminishing in a straight line from the foreground to the centre of the distance it passes over Mont Saint-Jean and through Waterloo to Brussels.

It is now tinged by a moving mass of English and Allied infantry, in retreat to a new position at Mont Saint-Jean. The sun shines brilliantly upon the foreground as yet, but towards Waterloo and the Forest of Soignes on the north horizon it is overcast with black clouds which are steadily advancing up the sky.

To mask the retreat the English outposts retain their position on the battlefield in the face of NEY'S troops, and keep up a desultory firing: the cavalry for the same reason remain, being drawn up in lines beside the intersecting Namur road.

Enter WELLINGTON, UXBRIDGE (who is in charge of the cavalry), MÜFFLING, VIVIAN, and others. They look through their field-glasses towards Frasnes, NEY'S position since his retreat of yesternight, and also towards NAPOLÉON'S at Ligny.

WELLINGTON

The noonday sun, striking so strongly there,
Makes mirrors of their arms. That they advance
Their growing radiance shows. Those gleams by Marbais
Suggest fixed bayonets.

UXBRIDGE

Vivian's glass reveals
That they are cuirassiers. Ney's troops, too, near
At last, methinks, along this other road.

WELLINGTON

One thing is sure: that here the whole French force
Schemes to unite and sharply follow us.

It formulates our fence. The cavalry
Must linger here no longer; but recede
To Mont Saint-Jean, as rearguard of the foot.
From the intelligence that Gordon brings
'Tis pretty clear old Blücher had to take
A damned good drubbing yesterday at Ligny,
And has been bent hard back! So that, for us,
Bound to the plighted plan, there is no choice
But to do like. . . . No doubt they'll say at home
That we've been well thrashed too. It can't be helped,
They must! . . . (He looks round at the sky.) A heavy rainfall threatens us,
To make it all the worse!

The speaker and his staff ride off along the Brussels road in the rear of the infantry, and UXBRIDGE begins the retreat of the cavalry.

CAPTAIN MERCER enters with a light battery.

MERCER (excitedly)

Look back, my lord;
Is it not Bonaparte himself we see
Upon the road I have come by?

UXBRIDGE (looking through glass)

Yes, by Heaven;
His face as clear-cut as the edge of a cloud
The sun behind shows up! His suite and all!
Fire—fire! And aim you well.

The battery hastily makes ready and fires.

No! It won't do.
He brings on mounted ordnance of his Guard,
So we're in danger here. Then limber up,
And off as soon as may be.

The English artillery and cavalry retreat at full speed, just as the weather bursts, with flashes of lightning and drops of rain. They all clatter off along the Brussels road, UXBRIDGE and his aides galloping beside the column; till no British are left at Quatre-Bras except the slain.

The focus of the scene follows the retreating English army, the highway and its margins panoramically gliding past the vision of the spectator. The phantoms chant monotonously while the retreat goes on.

CHORUS OF RUMOURS (aerial music)

Day's nether hours advance; storm supervenes
In heaviness unparalleled, that screens
With water-woven gauzes, vapour-bred,
The creeping clumps of half-obliterate red—
Severely harassed past each round and ridge
By the inimical lance. They gain the bridge
And village of Genappe, in equal fence
With weather and the enemy's violence.
—Cannon upon the foul and flooded road,
Cavalry in the cornfields mire-bestrowed,
With frothy horses floundering to their knees,
Make wayfaring a moil of miseries!
Till Britishry and Bonapartists lose
Their clashing colours for the tawny hues
That twilight sets on all its stealing tinct imbues.

The rising ground of Mont Saint-Jean, in front of Waterloo, is gained by the English vanguard and main masses of foot, and by degrees they are joined by the cavalry and artillery. The French are but little later in taking up their position amid the cornfields around La Belle Alliance.

Fires begin to shine up from the English bivouacs. Camp kettles are slung, and the men pile arms and stand round the blaze to dry themselves. The French opposite lie down like dead men in the dripping green wheat and rye, without supper and without fire.

By and by the English army also lies down, the men huddling together on the ploughed mud in their wet blankets, while some sleep sitting round the dying fires.

CHORUS OF THE YEARS (aerial music)

The eyelids of eve fall together at last,
And the forms so foreign to field and tree
Lie down as though native, and slumber fast!

CHORUS OF THE PITIES

Sore are the thrills of misgiving we see

In the artless champaign at this harlequinade,
Distracting a vigil where calm should be!

The green seems opprest, and the Plain afraid
Of a Something to come, whereof these are the proofs,—
Neither earthquake, nor storm, nor eclipse's shade!

CHORUS OF THE YEARS

Yea, the coneys are scared by the thud of hoofs,
And their white scuts flash at their vanishing heels,
And swallows abandon the hamlet-roofs.

The mole's tunnelled chambers are crushed by wheels,
The lark's eggs scattered, their owners fled;
And the hedgehog's household the sapper unseals.

The snail draws in at the terrible tread,
But in vain; he is crushed by the felloe-rim;
The worm asks what can be overhead,

And wriggles deep from a scene so grim,
And guesses him safe; for he does not know
What a foul red rain will be soaking him!

Beaten about by the heel and toe
Are butterflies, sick of the day's long rheum,
To die of a worse than the weather-foe.

Trodden and bruised to a miry tomb
Are ears that have greened but will never be gold,
And flowers in the bud that will never bloom.

CHORUS OF THE PITIES

So the season's intent, ere its fruit unfold,
Is frustrate, and mangled, and made succumb,
Like a youth of promise struck stark and cold! . . .

And what of these who to-night have come?

CHORUS OF THE YEARS

The young sleep sound; but the weather awakes
In the veterans, pains from the past that numb;

Old stabs of Ind, old Peninsular aches,
Old Friedland chills, haunt their moist mud bed,
Cramps from Austerlitz; till their slumber breaks.

CHORUS OF SINISTER SPIRITS

And each soul shivers as sinks his head
On the loam he's to lease with the other dead
From to-morrow's mist-fall till Time be sped!

The fires of the English go out, and silence prevails, save for the soft hiss of the rain that falls impartially on both the sleeping armies.

ACT SEVENTH

SCENE I

THE FIELD OF WATERLOO

An aerial view of the battlefield at the time of sunrise is disclosed.

The sky is still overcast, and rain still falls. A green expanse, almost unbroken, of rye, wheat, and clover, in oblong and irregular patches undivided by fences, covers the undulating ground, which sinks into a shallow valley between the French and English positions. The road from Brussels to Charleroi runs like a spit through both positions, passing at the back of the English into the leafy forest of Soignes.

The latter are turning out from their bivouacs. They move stiffly from their wet rest, and hurry to and fro like ants in an ant-hill. The tens of thousands of moving specks are largely of a brick-red colour, but the foreign contingent is darker.

Breakfasts are cooked over smoky fires of green wood. Innumerable groups, many in their shirt-sleeves, clean their rusty firelocks, drawing or exploding the charges, scrape the mud from themselves, and pipeclay from their cross-belts the red dye washed off their jackets by the rain.

At six o'clock they parade, spread out, and take up their positions in the line of battle, the front of which extends in a wavy riband three miles long, with three projecting bunches at Hougomont, La Haye Sainte, and La Haye.

Looking across to the French positions we observe that after advancing in dark streams from where they have passed the night they, too, deploy and wheel into their fighting-places—figures with red epaulettes and hairy knapsacks, their arms glittering like a display of cutlery at a hill-side fair.

They assume three concentric lines of crescent shape, that converge on the English midst, with great blocks of the Imperial Guard at the back of them. The rattle of their drums, their fanfarades, and their bands playing "Veillons au salut de l'Empire" contrast with the quiet reigning on the English side.

A knot of figures, comprising WELLINGTON with a suite of general and other staff-officers, ride backwards and forwards in front of the

English lines, where each regimental colour floats in the hands of the junior ensign. The DUKE himself, now a man of forty-six, is on his bay charger Copenhagen, in light pantaloons, a small plumeless cocked hat, and a blue cloak, which shows its white lining when blown back.

On the French side, too, a detached group creeps along the front in preliminary survey. BONAPARTE—also forty-six—in a grey overcoat, is mounted on his white arab Marengo, and accompanied by SOULT, NEY, JÉRÔME, DROUOT, and other marshals. The figures of aides move to and fro like shuttle-cocks between the group and distant points in the field. The sun has begun to gleam.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Discriminate these, and what they are,
Who stand so stalwartly to war.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Report, ye Rumourers of things near and far.

SEMICHORUS I OF RUMOURS (chanting)

Sweep first the Frenchmen's leftward lines along,
And eye the peaceful panes of Hougomont—
That seemed to hold prescriptive right of peace
In fee from Time till Time itself should cease!—
Jarred now by Reille's fierce foot-divisions three,
Flanked on their left by Piré's cavalry.—
The fourfold corps of d'Erlon, spread at length,
Compose the right, east of the famed chaussée—
The shelterless Charleroi-and-Brussels way,—
And Jacquinot's alert light-steeded strength
Still further right, their sharpened swords display.
Thus stands the first line.

SEMICHORUS II

Next behind its back
Comes Count Lobau, left of the Brussels track;
Then Domon's horse, the horse of Subervie;
Kellermann's cuirassed troopers twinkle-tipt,
And, backing d'Erlon, Milhaud's horse, equipt

Likewise in burnished steelwork sunshine-dipt:
So ranks the second line refulgently.

SEMICHORUS I

The third and last embattlement reveals
D'Erlon's, Lobau's, and Reille's foot-cannoniers,
And horse-drawn ordnance too, on massy wheels,
To strike with cavalry where space appears.

SEMICHORUS II

The English front, to left, as flanking force,
Has Vandeleur's hussars, and Vivian's horse;
Next them pace Picton's rows along the crest;
The Hanoverian foot-folk; Wincké; Best;
Bylandt's brigade, set forward fencelessly,
Pack's northern clansmen, Kempt's tough infantry,
With gaiter, epaulet, spat, and philibeg;
While Halkett, Ompteda, and Kielmansegge
Prolong the musters, near whose forward edge
Baring invests the Farm of Holy Hedge.

SEMICHORUS I

Maitland and Byng in Cooke's division range,
And round dun Hougomont's old lichened sides
A dense array of watching Guardsmen hides
Amid the peaceful produce of the grange,
Whose new-kerned apples, hairy gooseberries green,
And mint, and thyme, the ranks intrude between.—
Last, westward of the road that finds Nivelles,
Duplat draws up, and Adam parallel.

SEMICHORUS II

The second British line—embattled horse—
Holds the reverse slopes, screened, in ordered course;
Dörnberg's, and Arentsschildt's, and Colquhoun-Grant's,
And left of them, behind where Alten plants
His regiments, come the "Household" Cavalry;

And nigh, in Picton's rear, the trumpets call
The "Union" brigade of Ponsonby.
Behind these the reserves. In front of all,
Or interspaced, with slow-matched gunners manned,
Upthroated rows of threatful ordnance stand.

The clock of Nivelles convent church strikes eleven in the distance. Shortly after, coils of starch-blue smoke burst into being along the French lines, and the English batteries respond promptly, in an ominous roar that can be heard at Antwerp.

A column from the French left, six thousand strong, advances on the plantation in front of the château of Hougomont. They are played upon by the English ordnance; but they enter the wood, and dislodge some battalions there. The French approach the buildings, but are stopped by a loop-holed wall with a mass of English guards behind it. A deadly fire bursts from these through the loops and over the summit.

NAPOLÉON orders a battery of howitzers to play upon the building. Flames soon burst from it; but the foot-guards still hold the court-yard.

SCENE II

THE SAME. THE FRENCH POSITION

On a hillock near the farm of Rossomme a small table from the farmhouse has been placed; maps are spread thereon, and a chair is beside it. NAPOLÉON, SOULT, and other marshals are standing round, their horses waiting at the base of the slope.

NAPOLÉON looks through his glass at Hougomont. His elevated face makes itself distinct in the morning light as a gloomy resentful countenance, blue-black where shaven, and stained with snuff, with powderings of the same on the breast of his uniform. His stumpy figure, being just now thrown back, accentuates his stoutness.

NAPOLÉON

Let Reille be warned that these his surly sets
On Hougomont château, can scarce defray
Their mounting bill of blood. They do not touch
The core of my intent—to pierce and roll
The centre upon the right of those opposed.

Thereon will turn the outcome of the day,
In which our odds are ninety to their ten!

SOULT

Yes—prove there time and promptitude enough
To call back Grouchy here. Of his approach
I see no sign.

NAPOLÉON (roughly)

Hours past he was bid come.
—But naught imports it! We are enough without him.
You have been beaten by this Wellington,
And so you think him great. But let me teach you
Wellington is no foe to reckon with.
His army, too, is poor. This clash to-day
Is not more serious for our seasoned files
Than breakfasting.

SOULT

Such is my earnest hope.

NAPOLÉON

Observe that Wellington still labours on,
Stoutening his right behind Gomont château,
But leaves his left and centre as before—
Weaker, if anything. He plays our game!

WELLINGTON can, in fact, be seen detaching from his main line several companies of Guards to check the aims of the French on Hougomont.

Let me re-word my tactics. Ney leads off
By seizing Mont Saint-Jean. Then d'Erlon stirs
And heaves up his division from the left.
The second corps will move abreast of him,
The sappers nearing to entrench themselves
Within the aforesaid farm.

Enter an aide-de-camp.

AIDE

From Marshal Ney,
Sire, I bring hasty word that all is poised
To strike the vital stroke, and only waits
Your Majesty's command.

NAPOLÉON

Which he shall have
When I have scanned the hills for Grouchy's helms.

NAPOLÉON turns his glass to an upland four or five miles off on the right, known as St. Lambert's Chapel Hill. Gazing more and more intently, he takes rapid pinches of snuff in excitement, NEY'S columns meanwhile standing for the word to advance, eighty guns being ranged in front of La Belle Alliance in support of them.

I see a darkly crawling, slug-like shape
Embodying far out there,—troops seemingly—
Grouchy's van-guard. What think you?

SOULT (also examining closely)

Verily troops;
And, maybe, Grouchy's. But the air is hazed.

NAPOLÉON

If troops at all, they are Grouchy's. Why misgive,
And force on ills you fear!

ANOTHER MARSHAL

It seems a wood.
Trees don bold outlines in their new-leafed pride.

ANOTHER MARSHAL

It is the creeping shadow from a cloud.

ANOTHER MARSHAL

It is a mass of stationary foot;
I can descry piled arms.

NAPOLÉON sends off the order for NEY'S attack—the grand assault on the English midst, including the farm of La Haye Sainte. It opens with a half-hour's thunderous discharge of artillery, which ceases at length to let D'ERLON'S infantry pass.

Four huge columns of these, shouting defiantly, push forwards in face of the reciprocal fire from the cannon of the English. Their effrontery carries them so near the Anglo-Allied lines that the latter waver. But PICTON brings up PACK'S brigade, before which the French in turn recede, though they make an attempt on La Haye Sainte, whence BARING'S Germans pour a resolute fire.

WELLINGTON, who is seen afar as one of a group standing by a great elm, orders OMPTEDA to send assistance to BARING, as may be gathered from the darting of aides to and fro between the points, like house-flies dancing their quadrilles.

East of the great highway the right columns of D'ERLON'S corps have climbed the slopes. BYLANDT'S sorely exposed Dutch are broken, and in their flight disorder the ranks of the English Twenty-eighth, the Carabineers of the Ninety-fifth being also dislodged from the sand-pit they occupied.

NAPOLÉON

All prospers marvellously! Gomont is hemmed;
La Haye Sainte too; their centre jeopardized;
Travers and d'Erlon dominate the crest,
And further strength of foot is following close.
Their troops are raw; the flower of England's force
That fought in Spain, America now holds.—
To-night we sleep in Brussels!

SIR THOMAS PICTON, seeing what is happening, orders KEMPT'S brigade forward. It volleys murderously DONZELOT'S columns of D'ERLON'S corps, and repulses them. As they recede PICTON is beheld shouting an order to charge.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

I catch a voice that cautions Picton now
Against his rashness. "What the hell care I,—
Is my curst carcase worth a moment's mind?—
Come on!" he answers. Onwardly he goes!

His tall, stern, saturnine figure with its bronzed complexion is on nearer approach discerned heading the charge. As he advances to the slope between the cross-roads and the sand-pit, riding very conspicuously, he falls dead, a bullet in his forehead. His aide,

assisted by a soldier, drags the body beneath a tree and hastens on. KEMPT takes his command.

Next MARCOGNET is repulsed by PACK'S brigade. D'ERLON'S infantry and TRAVERS'S cuirassiers are charged by the Union Brigade of Scotch[1] Greys, Royal Dragoons, and Inniskillens, and cut down everywhere, the brigade following them so furiously that LORD UXBRIDGE tries in vain to recall it. On its coming near the French it is overwhelmed by MILHAUD'S cuirassiers, scarcely a fifth of the brigade returning.

An aide enters to NAPOLÉON from GENERAL DOMON.

AIDE

The General, on a far reconnaissance,
Says, sire, there is no room for longer doubt
That those debouching on St. Lambert's Hill
Are Prussian files.

NAPOLÉON

Then where is General Grouchy?

Enter COLONEL MARBOT with a prisoner.

Aha—a Prussian, too! How comes he here!

MARBOT

Sire, my hussars have captured him near Lasnes—
A subaltern of the Silesian Horse.
A note from Bülow to Lord Wellington,
Announcing that a Prussian corps is close,
Was found on him. He speaks our language, sire.

NAPOLÉON (to prisoner)

What force looms yonder on St. Lambert's Hill?

PRISONER

General Count Bülow's van, your Majesty.

A dismayed scowl crosses NAPOLÉON'S sallow face.

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[1] The spelling of the date is used.

NAPOLÉON

Where, then, did your main army lie last night?

PRISONER

At Wavre.

NAPOLÉON

But clashed it with no Frenchmen there?

PRISONER

With none. We deemed they had marched on Plancenoit.

NAPOLÉON (shortly)

Take him away. (The prisoner is removed.) Has Grouchy's whereabouts
Been sought, to apprize him of this Prussian trend?

SOULT

Certainly, sire. I sent a messenger.

NAPOLÉON (bitterly)

A messenger! Had my poor Berthier been here
Six would have insufficed! Now then: seek Ney;
Bid him to sling the valour of his braves
Fiercely on England ere Count Bülow come;
And advertize the succours on the hill
As Grouchy's. (Aside) This is my one battle-chance;
The Allies have many such! (To SOULT) If Bülow nears,
He cannot join in time to share the fight.
And if he could, 'tis but a corps the more. . . .
This morning we had ninety chances ours,
We have threescore still. If Grouchy but retrieve
His fault of absence, conquest comes with eve!

The scene shifts.

SCENE III

SAINT LAMBERT'S CHAPEL HILL

A hill half-way between Wavre and the field of Waterloo, five miles to the north-east of the scene preceding. The hill is wooded, with some open land around. To the left of the scene, towards Waterloo, is a valley.

DUMB SHOW

Marching columns in Prussian uniforms, coming from the direction of Wavre, debouch upon the hill from the road through the wood.

They are the advance-guard and two brigades of BÜLOW'S corps, that have been joined there by BLÜCHER. The latter has just risen from the bed to which he has been confined since the battle of Ligny, two days back. He still looks pale and shaken by the severe fall and trampling he endured near the end of the action.

On the summit the troops halt, and a discussion between BLÜCHER and his staff ensues.

The cannonade in the direction of Waterloo is growing more and more violent. BLÜCHER, after looking this way and that, decides to fall upon the French right at Plancenoit as soon as he can get there, which will not be yet.

Between this point and that the ground descends steeply to the valley on the spectator's left, where there is a mud-bottomed stream, the Lasne; the slope ascends no less abruptly on the other side towards Plancenoit. It is across this defile alone that the Prussian army can proceed thither—a route of unusual difficulty for artillery; where, moreover, the enemy is suspected of having placed a strong outpost during the night to intercept such an approach.

A figure goes forward—that of MAJOR FALKENHAUSEN, who is sent to reconnoitre, and they wait a tedious time, the firing at Waterloo growing more tremendous. FALKENHAUSEN comes back with the welcome news that no outpost is there.

There now remains only the difficulty of the defile itself; and the attempt is made. BLÜCHER is descried riding hither and thither as the guns drag heavily down the slope into the muddy bottom of the valley. Here the wheels get stuck, and the men, already tired by marching since five in the morning, seem inclined to leave the guns where they are. But the thunder from Waterloo still goes on, BLÜCHER exhorts his men by words and eager gestures, and they do at length get the guns across, though with much loss of time.

The advance-guard now reaches some thick trees called the Wood of Paris. It is followed by the LOSTHIN and HILLER divisions of foot, and in due course by the remainder of the two brigades. Here they halt, and await the arrival of the main body of BÜLOW'S corps, and the third corps under THIELEMANN.

The scene shifts.

SCENE IV

THE FIELD OF WATERLOO. THE ENGLISH POSITION

WELLINGTON, on Copenhagen, is again under the elm-tree behind La Haye Sainte. Both horse and rider are covered with mud-splashes, but the weather having grown finer the DUKE has taken off his cloak.

UXBRIDGE, FITZROY SOMERSET, CLINTON, ALTEN, COLVILLE, DE LANCEY, HERVEY, GORDON, and other of his staff officers and aides are near him; there being also present GENERALS MÜFFLING, HÜGEL, and ALAVA; also TYLER, PICTON'S aide. The roar of battle continues.

WELLINGTON

I am grieved at losing Picton; more than grieved.
He was as grim a devil as ever lived,
And roughish-mouthed withal. But never a man
More stout in fight, more stoical in blame!

TYLER

Before he left for this campaign he said,
"When you shall hear of *my* death, mark my words,
You'll hear of a bloody day!" and, on my soul,
'Tis true.

Enter another aide-de-camp.

AIDE

Sir William Ponsonby, my lords, has fallen.
His horse got mud-stuck in a new-ploughed plot,

Lancers surrounded him and bore him down,
And six then ran him through. The occasion sprung
Mainly from the Brigade's too reckless rush,
Sheer to the French front lines.

WELLINGTON (gravely)

Ah—so it comes!
The Greys were bound to pay—'tis always so—
Full dearly for their dash so far afield.
Valour unballasted but lands its freight
On the enemy's shore.—What has become of Hill?

AIDE

We have not seen him latterly, your Grace.

WELLINGTON

By God, I hope I haven't lost him, too?

BRIDGMAN (just come up)

Lord Hill's bay charger, being shot dead, your Grace,
Rolled over him in falling. He is bruised,
But hopes to be in place again betimes.

WELLINGTON

Praise Fate for thinking better of that frown!

It is now nearing four o'clock. La Haye Sainte is devastated by the second attack of NEY. The farm has been enveloped by DONZELOT's division, its garrison, the King's German Legion, having fought till all ammunition was exhausted. The gates are forced open, and in the retreat of the late defenders to the main Allied line they are nearly all cut or shot down.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

O Farm of sad vicissitudes and strange!
Farm of the Holy Hedge, yet fool of change!
Whence lit so sanct a name on thy now violate grange?

WELLINGTON (to Müffling, resolutely)

Despite their fierce advantage here, I swear
By every God that war can call upon
To hold our present place at any cost,
Until your force coöperate with our lines!
To that I stand; although 'tis bruited now
That Bülow's corps has only reached Ohain.
I've sent Freemantle hence to seek them there,
And give them inkling we shall need them soon.

MÜFFLING (looking at his watch)

I had hoped that Blücher would be here ere this.

The staff turn their glasses on the French position.

UXBRIDGE

What movement can it be they contemplate?

WELLINGTON

A shock of cavalry on the hottest scale,
It seems to me. . . . (To aide) Bid him to reinforce
The front line with some second-line brigades;
Some, too, from the reserve.

The Brunswickers advance to support MAITLAND'S Guards, and the MITCHELL and ADAM Brigades establish themselves above Hougomont, which is still in flames.

NEY, in continuation of the plan of throwing his whole force on the British centre before the advent of the Prussians, now intensifies his onslaught with the cavalry. Terrific discharges of artillery initiate it to clear the ground. A heavy round-shot dashes through the tree over the heads of WELLINGTON and his generals, and boughs and leaves come flying down on them.

WELLINGTON

Good practice that! I vow they did not fire
So dexterously in Spain. (He calls up an aide.) Bid
Ompteda
Direct the infantry to lie tight down

On the reverse ridge-slope, to screen themselves
While these close shots and shells are teasing us;
When the charge comes they'll cease.

[The order is carried out.

NEY'S cavalry attack now matures. MILHAUD'S cuirassiers in twenty-four squadrons advance down the opposite decline, followed and supported by seven squadrons of lancers and twelve squadrons of chasseurs under DESNÖETTES. They disappear for a minute in the hollow between the armies.

UXBRIDGE

Ah — now we have got their long-brewed plot explained!

WELLINGTON (nodding)

That this was rigged for some picked time to-day
I had inferred. But that it would be risked
Sheer on our lines, while still they stand unswayed,
In conscious battle-trim, I reckoned not.
It looks a madman's cruel enterprise!

FITZROY SOMERSET

We have just heard that Ney embarked on it
Without an order, ere its aptness riped.

WELLINGTON

It may be so: he's rash. And yet I doubt.
I know Napoléon. If the onset fail
It will be Ney's; if it succeed he'll claim it!

A dull reverberation of the tread of innumerable hoofs comes from behind the hill, and the foremost troops rise into view.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Behold the gorgeous coming of those horse,
Accoutred in kaleidoscopic hues
That would persuade us war has beauty in it!—

Discern the troopers' mien; each with the air
Of one who is himself a tragedy:
The cuirassiers, steeled, mirroring the day;
Red lancers, green chasseurs: behind the blue
The red; the red before the green:
A lingering-on, till late in Christendom,
Of the barbaric trick to terrorize
The foe by aspect!

WELLINGTON directs his glass to an officer in a rich uniform with many decorations on his breast, who rides near the front of the approaching squadrons. The DUKE's face expresses admiration.

WELLINGTON

It's Marshal Ney himself who heads the charge.
The finest cavalry commander, he,
That wears a foreign plume; ay, probably
The whole world through!

SPIRIT IRONIC

And when that matchless chief
Sentenced shall lie to ignominious death
But technically deserved, no finger he
Who speaks will lift to save him!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

To his shame.
We must discount war's generous impulses
I sadly see.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Be mute, and let spin on
This whirlwind of the Will!

As NEY's cavalry ascends to the English position the swish of the horses' knees through the standing corn can be heard, and the reverberation of hoofs increases in strength. The English gunners stand with their port-fires ready, which are seen glowing luridly in the daylight. There is comparative silence.

A Voice

Now, captains, are you loaded?

Captains

Yes, my lord.

Voice

Point carefully, and wait till their whole height
Shows up above the ridge.

When the squadrons rise in full view, within sixty yards of the cannon-mouths, the batteries fire, with a concussion that shakes the hill itself. Their shot punch holes through the front ranks of the cuirassiers, and horses and riders fall in heaps. But they are not stopped, hardly checked, galloping up to the mouths of the guns, passing between the pieces, and plunging among the Allied infantry behind the ridge, who, with the advance of the horsemen, have sprung up from their prone position and formed into squares.

Spirit of Rumour

Ney guides the fore-front of the carabineers
Through charge and charge, with rapid recklessness.
Horses, cuirasses, sabres, helmets, men,
Impinge confusedly on the pointed prongs
Of the English kneeling there, whose dim red shapes
Behind their slanted steel seem trampled flat
And sworded to the sward. The charge recedes,
And lo, the tough lines rank there as before,
Save that they are shrunken.

Spirit of the Pities

Hero of heroes, too,
Ney, (not forgetting those who gird against him).—
Simple and single-souled lieutenant he. . . .
Why should men's many-valued motions take
So barbarous a groove!

The cuirassiers and lancers surge round the English and Allied squares like waves, striking furiously on them and well-nigh breaking them. They stand in dogged silence amid the French cheers.

WELLINGTON (to the nearest square)

Hard pounding this, my men! I truly trust
You'll pound the longest!

SQUARE

Hip-hip-hip-hurrah!

MÜFFLING (again referring to his watch)

However firmly they may stand, in faith,
Their firmness must have bounds to it, because
There are bounds to human strength! . . . Your Grace, I ride
To leftward now, to spirit Zieten on.

WELLINGTON

Good. It is time! I think he will be late,
However, in the field.

MÜFFLING goes. Enter an aide, breathless.

AIDE

Your Grace, the Ninety-fifth are patience-spent
With standing under fire so passing long.
They writhe to charge—or anything but stand!

WELLINGTON

Not yet. They shall have at 'em later on.
At present keep them firm.

[Exit aide.

The Allied squares stand like little red-brick castles, independent of each other, and motionless except at the dry hurried command "Close up!" repeated every now and then as they are slowly thinned. On the other hand, under their firing and bayonets a disorder becomes apparent among the charging horse, on whose cuirasses the

bullets snap like stones on window-panes. At this the Allied cavalry waiting in the rear advance; and by degrees they deliver the squares from their enemies, who are withdrawn to their own position to prepare for a still more strenuous assault.

The point of view shifts.

SCENE V

THE SAME. THE WOMEN'S CAMP NEAR MONT SAINT-JEAN

On the sheltered side of a clump of trees at the back of the English position camp-fires are smouldering. Soldiers' wives, mistresses, and children from a few months to five or six years of age, sit on the ground round the fires or on armfuls of straw from the adjoining farm. Wounded soldiers lie near the women. The wind occasionally brings the smoke and smell of the battle into the encampment, the noise being continuous. Two waggons stand near; also a surgeon's horse in charge of a bâtman, laden with bone-saws, knives, probes, tweezers, and other surgical instruments. Behind lies a woman who has just given birth to a child, which a second woman is holding.

Many of the other women are shredding lint, the elder children assisting. Some are dressing the slighter wounds of the soldiers who have come in here instead of going further. Along the road near is a continual procession of bearers of wounded men to the rear. The occupants of the camp take hardly any notice of the thundering of the cannon. A camp-follower is playing a fiddle near.

Another woman enters.

WOMAN

There's no sign of my husband any longer. His battalion is half-a-mile from where it was. He looked back as they wheeled off towards the fighting-line, as much as to say, "Nancy, if I don't see 'ee again, this is good-bye, my dear." Yes, poor man! . . . Not but what 'a had a temper at times!

SECOND WOMAN

I'm out of all that. My husband—as I used to call him for form's sake — is quiet enough. He was wownded at Quarter-Brass the day before yesterday, and died the same night. But I didn't know it till I got here, and then says I, "Widder or no widder, I mean to see this out."

A sergeant staggers in with blood dropping from his face.

SERGEANT

Damned if I think you will see it out, mis'ess, for if I don't mistake there'll be a retreat of the whole army on Brussels soon. We can't stand much longer! —For the love of God, have ye got a cup of water, if nothing stronger? (They hand a cup.)

THIRD WOMAN (entering and sinking down)

The Lord send that I may never see again what I've been seeing while looking for my poor galliant Joe! The surgeon asked me to lend a hand; and 'twas worse than opening innerds at a pig-killing.

(She faints.)

FOURTH WOMAN (to a little girl)

Never mind her, my dear; come and help me with this one. (She goes with the girl to a soldier in red with buff facings who lies some distance off.) Ah—'tis no good. He's gone.

GIRL

No, mother. His eyes are wide open, a-staring to get a sight of the battle!

FOURTH WOMAN

That's nothing. Lots of dead ones stare in that silly way. It depends upon where they were hit. I

was all through the Peninsula; that's how I know. (She covers the horny gaze of the man. Shouts and louder discharges are heard.)—Heaven's high tower, what's that?

Enter an officer's servant.[1]

SERVANT

Waiting with the major's spare hoss—up to my knees in mud from the rain that had come down like baccy-pipe stems all the night and morning—I have just seen a charge never beholded since the days of the Amalekites! The squares still stand, but Ney's cavalry have made another attack. Their swords are streaming with blood, and their horses' hoofs squash out our poor fellows' bowels as they lie. A ball has sunk in Sir Thomas Picton's forehead and killed him like Goliath the Philistine. I don't see what's to stop the French. Well, it's the Lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes. Hullo, who's he? (They look towards the road.) A fine hale old gentleman, isn't he? What business has a man of that sort here?

Enter, on the highway near, the DUKE OF RICHMOND in plain clothes, on horseback, accompanied by two youths, his sons. They draw rein on an eminence, and gaze towards the battlefield.

RICHMOND (to son)

Everything looks as bad as possible just now. I wonder where your brother is? However, we can't go any nearer. . . . We'd better perhaps return, or we shall be caught in the stream of retreat, and they will be uneasy at home. . . . Yes, the bât-horses are already being moved off, and there are more and more fugitives. A ghastly finish to your mother's ball, by Gad if it isn't!

They turn their horses towards Brussels. Enter, meeting them, MR. LEGH, a Wessex gentleman, also come out to view the battle.

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[1] Samuel Clark; born 1779, died 1857. Buried at West Stafford, Dorset.

LEGH

Can you tell me, sir, how the battle is going?

RICHMOND

Badly, badly, I fear, sir. There will be a retreat soon, seemingly.

LEGH

Indeed! Yes, a crowd of fugitives are coming over the hill even now. What will these poor women do?

RICHMOND

God knows! They will be ridden over, I suppose. Though it is extraordinary how they do contrive to escape destruction while hanging so close to the rear of an action! They are moving, however. Well, we will move too.

Exeunt DUKE OF RICHMOND, sons, and MR. LEGH.

The point of view shifts.

SCENE VI

THE SAME. THE FRENCH POSITION

NEY'S charge of cavalry against the opposite upland has been three times renewed without success. He collects the scattered squadrons to renew it a fourth time. The glittering host again ascends the confronting slopes over the bodies of those previously left there, and amid horses wandering about without riders, or crying as they lie with entrails trailing or limbs broken.

NAPOLÉON falls into a drowsy stupefaction as he looks on near the farm of Rossomme, till he nods in momentary sleep.

NAPOLÉON (starting up)

A horrible dream has gripped me—horrible!
I saw before me Lannes—just as he looked
That day at Aspern: mutilated, bleeding!
"What—blood again?" he said to me. "Still blood?"

He further arouses himself, takes snuff vehemently, and looks through his glass.

What time is it?—Ah, these assaults of Ney's!
They are a blunder; they've been enterprised
An hour too early! . . . There Lhéritier goes
Onward with his division next Milhaud;
Now Kellermann must follow up with his.
So one mistake makes many. Yes; ay; yes!

SOULT

I fear that Ney has compromised us here
Just as at Jena; even worse!

NAPOLÉON

No less
Must we support him now he is launched on it. . . .
The miracle is that he is still alive!

NEY and his mass of cavalry again pass the English batteries and disappear amid the squares beyond.

Their cannon are abandoned; and their squares
Again environed—see! I would to God
Murat could but be here! Yet I disdained
His proffered service. . . . All my star asks now
Is to break some half-dozen of those blocks
Of English yonder. He was the man to do it.

NEY and D'ERLON'S squadrons are seen emerging from the English squares in a disorganized state, the attack having failed like the previous ones.

An aide-de-camp enters to NAPOLÉON.

AIDE

The Prussians have debouched on our right rear
From Paris-wood; and Losthin's infantry
Appear by Plancenoit; Hiller's to leftwards.
Two regiments of their horse protect their front,
And three light batteries.

A haggard shade crosses NAPOLÉON'S face.

NAPOLÉON

What then! That's not a startling force as yet.
A counter-stroke by Domon's cavalry
Must shatter them. Lobau must bring his foot
Up forward, heading for the Prussian front,
Unrecking losses by their cannonade.

[Exit aide.

The din of battle continues. DOMON'S horse are soon seen advancing towards and attacking the Prussian hussars in front of the infantry; and he next attempts to silence the Prussian batteries playing on him by leading up his troops and cutting down the gunners. But he has to fall back upon the infantry of LOBAU.

Enter another aide-de-camp.

AIDE

These tidings I report, your Majesty:—
Von Ryssel's and von Hacké's Prussian foot
Have lately sallied from the Wood of Paris,
Bearing on us; no vast array as yet;
But twenty thousand loom not far behind
These vaward marchers!

NAPOLÉON

Ah! They swarm thus thickly?
But be they hell's own legions we'll defy them!—
Lobau's men will stand firm.

He looks in the direction of the English lines, where NEY'S cavalry-assaults still linger furiously on.

But who rides hither,
Spotting the sky with clods in his high haste?

SOULT

It looks like Colonel Heymès—come from Ney.

NAPOLÉON (sullenly)

And his face shows what clef his music's in!

Enter COLONEL HEYMÈS, blood-stained, muddy, and breathless.

HEYMÈS

The Prince of Moscow, sire, the Marshal Ney,
Bids me implore that infantry be sent
Immediately, to further his attack.
They cannot be dispensed with, save we fail!

NAPOLÉON (furiously)

Infantry! Where the sacred God thinks he
I can find infantry for him! Forsooth,
Does he expect me to create them—eh?
Why sends he such a message, seeing well
How we are straitened here!

HEYMÈS

Such was the prayer
Of my commission, sire. And I may say
That I myself have seen his strokes must waste
Without such backing.

NAPOLÉON

Why?

HEYMÈS

Our cavalry
Lie stretched in swathes, fronting the furnace-throats

Of the English cannon as a breastwork built
Of reeking corpses. Marshal Ney's third horse
Is shot. Besides the slain, Donop, Guyot,
Delort, Lhéritier, Piquet, Travers, more,
Are vilely wounded. On the other hand
Wellington has sought refuge in a square,
Few of his generals are not killed or hit,
And all is tickle with him. But I see,
Likewise, that I can claim no reinforcement,
And will return and say so.

[Exit HEYMÈS.

NAPOLÉON (to Soult, sadly)

Ney does win me!
I fain would strengthen him.—Within an ace
Of breaking down the English as he is,
'Twould write upon the sunset "Victory!"—
But whom may spare we from the right here now?
No single man!

An interval.

Life's curse begins, I see,
With helplessness! . . . All I can compass is
To send Durutte to fall on Papelotte,
And yet more strongly occupy La Haye,
To cut off Bülow's right from bearing up
And checking Ney's attack. Further than this
None but the Gods can scheme!

SOULT hastily begins writing orders to that effect.

The point of view shifts.

SCENE VII

THE SAME. THE ENGLISH POSITION

The din of battle continues. WELLINGTON, UXBRIDGE, HILL, DE LANCEY, GORDON, and others discovered near the middle of the line.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

It is a moment when the steadiest pulse
Thuds pit-a-pat. The crisis shapes and nears
For Wellington as for his counter-chief.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

The hour is shaking him, unshakeable
As he may seem!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Know'st not at this stale time
That shaken and unshaken are alike
But demonstrations from the Back of Things?
Must I again reveal It as It hauls
The halyards of the world?

A transparency as in earlier scenes again pervades the spectacle, and the ubiquitous urging of the Immanent Will becomes visualized. The web connecting all the apparently separate shapes includes WELLINGTON in its tissue with the rest, and shows him, like them, as acting while discovering his intention to act. By the lurid light the faces of every row, square, group, and column of men, French and English, wear the expression of that of people in a dream.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES (tremulously)

Yea, sire; I see.
Disquiet me, pray, no more!

The strange light passes, and the embattled hosts on the field seem to move independently as usual.

WELLINGTON (to Uxbridge)

Manœuvring does not seem to animate
Napoléon's methods now. Forward he comes,
And pounds away on us in the ancient style,
Till he is beaten back in the ancient style;
And so the see-saw sways!

The din increases. WELLINGTON's aide-de-camp, Sir A. GORDON, a little in his rear, falls mortally wounded. The DUKE turns quickly.

But where is Gordon?
Ah—hit is he! That's bad, that's bad, by God.

[GORDON is removed. An aide enters.

AIDE

Your Grace, the Colonel Ompteda has fallen,
And La Haye Sainte is now a bath of blood.
Nothing more can be done there, save with help.
The Rifles suffer sharply!

An aide is seen coming from KEMPT.

WELLINGTON

What says he?

DE LANCEY

He says that Kempt, being riddled through and thinned,
Sends him for reinforcements.

WELLINGTON (with heat)

Reinforcements?
And where am I to get him reinforcements
In Heaven's name! I've no reinforcements here,
As he should know.

AIDE (hesitating)

What's to be done, your Grace?

WELLINGTON

Done? Those he has left him, be they many or few,
Fight till they fall, like others in the field!

[Exit aide.

The Quartermaster-General DE LANCEY, riding by WELLINGTON, is struck by a lobbing shot that hurls him over the head of his horse. WELLINGTON and others go to him.

DE LANCEY (faintly)

I may as well be left to die in peace!

WELLINGTON

He may recover. Take him to the rear,
And call the best attention up to him.

DE LANCEY is carried off. The next moment a shell bursts close to WELLINGTON.

HILL (approaching)

I strongly feel you stand too much exposed!

WELLINGTON

I know, I know. It matters not one damn!
I may as well be shot as not perceive
What ills are raging here.

HILL

Conceding such,
And as you may be ended momently,
A truth there is no blinking, what commands
Have you to leave me, should fate shape it so?

WELLINGTON

These simply: to hold out unto the last,
As long as one man stands on one lame leg
With one ball in his pouch!—then end as I.

He rides on slowly with the others. NEY'S charges, though fruitless so far, are still fierce. His troops are now reduced to one-half. Regiments of the BACHELU division, and the JAMIN brigade, are at last moved up to his assistance. They are partly swept down by the Allied batteries, and partly notched away by the infantry, the smoke being now so thick that the position of the battalions is revealed only by the flashing of the priming-pans and muzzles, and by the furious oaths heard behind the cloud. WELLINGTON comes back.

Enter another aide-de-camp.

AIDE

We bow to the necessity of saying
That our brigade is lessened to one-third,
Your Grace. And those who are left alive of it
Are so unmuscled by fatigue and thirst
That some relief, however temporary,
Becomes sore need.

WELLINGTON

Inform your general
That his proposal asks the impossible!
That he, I, every Englishman afield,
Must fall upon the spot we occupy,
Our wounds in front.

AIDE

It is enough, your Grace.
I answer for't that he, those under him,
And I withal, will bear us as you say.

[Exit aide.

The din of battle goes on. WELLINGTON is grave but calm. Like those around him, he is splashed to the top of his hat with partly dried mire, mingled with red spots; his face is grimed in the same way, little courses showing themselves where the sweat has trickled down from his brow and temples.

CLINTON (to Hill)

A rest would do our chieftain no less good,
In faith, than that unfortunate brigade!

He is tried damnably; and much more strained
Than I have ever seen him.

HILL

Endless risks
He's running likewise. What the hell would happen
If he were shot, is more than I can say!

WELLINGTON (calling to some near)

At Talavera, Salamanca, boys,
And at Vitoria, we saw smoke together;
And though the day seems wearing doubtfully,
Beaten we must not be! What would they say
Of us at home, if so?

A CRY (from the French)

Their centre breaks!
Vive l'Empereur!

It comes from the FOY and BACHELU divisions, which are rushing forward. HALKETT'S and DUPLAT'S brigades intercept. DUPLAT falls, shot dead; but the venturesome French regiments, pierced with converging fires, and cleft with shells, have to retreat.

HILL (rejoining Wellington)

The French artillery-fire
To the right still renders regiments restive there
That have to stand. The long exposure galls them.

WELLINGTON

They must be stayed as our poor means afford.
I have to bend attention steadfastly
Upon the centre here. The game just now
Goes all against us; and if staunchness fail
But for one moment with these thinning foot,
Defeat succeeds!

The battle continues to sway hither and thither with concussions, wounds, smoke, the fumes of gunpowder, and the steam from the hot bodies of grape-torn horses and men. One side of a Hanoverian square is blown away; the three remaining sides form themselves into a triangle. So many of his aides are cut down that it is difficult for WELLINGTON to get reports of what is happening afar. It begins to be discovered at the front that a regiment of hussars, and others without ammunition, have deserted, and that some officers in the rear, honestly concluding the battle to be lost, are riding quietly off to Brussels. Those who are left unwounded of WELLINGTON'S staff show gloomy misgivings at such signs, despite their own firmness.

SPIRIT SINISTER

One needs must be a ghost
To move here in the midst 'twixt host and host!
Their balls right tunefully through my ichor blow
As I were an organ-stop. It's merry so;
What damage mortal flesh must undergo!

A Prussian officer enters to MÜFFLING, who has again rejoined the DUKE'S suite. MÜFFLING hastens forward to WELLINGTON.

MÜFFLING

Blücher has just begun to operate;
But owing to Gneisenau's stolid stagnancy
The body of our army looms not yet!
As Zieten's corps still plod behind Smohain
Their coming must be late. Blücher's attack
Strikes the remote right rear of the enemy,
Somewhere by Plancenoit.

WELLINGTON

A timely blow;
But would that Zieten sped! Well, better late
Than never. We'll still stand.

The point of observation shifts.

SCENE VIII

THE SAME. LATER

NEY's long attacks on the centre with cavalry having failed, those left of the squadrons and their infantry-supports fall back pell-mell in broken groups across the depression between the armies.

Meanwhile BÜLOW, having engaged LOBAU's Sixth Corps, carries Plancenoit.

The artillery-fire between the French and the English continues. An officer of the Third Foot-guards comes up to WELLINGTON and those of his suite that survive.

OFFICER

Our Colonel Canning—coming I know not whence—

WELLINGTON

I lately sent him with important words
To the remoter lines.

OFFICER

As he returned
A grape-shot struck him in the breast; he fell,
At once a dead man. General Halkett, too,
Has had his cheek shot through, but still keeps going.

WELLINGTON

And how proceeds De Lancey?

OFFICER

I am told
That he forbids the surgeons waste their time
On him, who well can wait till worse are eased.

WELLINGTON

A noble fellow.

NAPOLÉON can now be seen, across the valley, pushing forward a new scheme of some sort, urged to it obviously by the visible nearing of further Prussian corps. The EMPEROR is as critically situated as WELLINGTON, and his army is now formed in a right angle ("en potence"), the main front to the English, the lesser to as many of the Prussians as have yet arrived. His gestures show him to be giving instructions of desperate import to a general whom he has called up.

SPIRIT IRONIC

He bids La Bedoyère to speed away
Along the whole sweep of the surging line,
And there announce to the breath-shotten bands
Who toil for a chimæra trustfully,
With seventy pounds of luggage on their loins,
That the dim Prussian masses seen afar
Are Grouchy's three-and-thirty thousand, come
To clinch a victory.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

But Ney demurs!

SPIRIT IRONIC

Ney holds indignantly that such a feint
Is not war-worthy. Says Napoléon then,
Snuffing anew, with sour sardonic scowl,
That he is choiceless.

SPIRIT SINISTER

Excellent Emperor!
He tops all human greatness; in that he
To lesser grounds of greatness adds the prime,
Of being without a conscience.

LA BEDOYÈRE and orderlies start on their mission. The false

intelligence is seen to spread, by the excited motion of the columns, and the soldiers can be heard shouting as their spirits revive.

WELLINGTON is beginning to discern the features of the coming onset, when COLONEL FRASER rides up.

FRASER

We have just learnt from a deserting captain,
One of the carabineers who charged of late,
That an assault which dwarfs all instances—
The whole Imperial Guard in welded weight—
Is shortly to be made.

WELLINGTON

For your smart speed
My thanks. My observation is confirmed.
We'll hasten now along the battle-line (to Staff),
As swiftest means for giving orders out
Whereby to combat this.

The speaker, accompanied by HILL, UXBRIDGE, and others—all now looking as worn and besmirched as the men in the ranks—proceed along the lines, and dispose the brigades to meet the threatened shock. The infantry are brought out of the shelter they have recently sought, the cavalry stationed in the rear, and the batteries of artillery hitherto kept in reserve are moved to the front.

The last Act of the battle begins.

There is a preliminary attack by DONZELOT'S columns, combined with swarms of sharpshooters, to the disadvantage of the English and their allies. WELLINGTON has scanned it closely. FITZROY SOMERSET, his military secretary, comes up.

WELLINGTON

What casualty has thrown its shade among
The regiments of Nassau, to shake them so?

SOMERSET

The Prince of Orange has been badly struck—
A bullet through his shoulder—so they tell;
And Kielmansegge has shown some signs of stress.

Kincaird's tried line wanes leaner and more lean—
Whittled to a weak skein of skirmishers;
The Twenty-seventh lie dead.

WELLINGTON

Ah yes—I know!

While they watch developments a cannon-shot passes and knocks SOMERSET's right arm to a mash. He is assisted to the rear.

NEY and FRIANT now lead forward the last and most desperate assault of the day, in charges of the Old and Middle Guard, the attack by DONZELOT and ALLIX further east still continuing as a support. It is about a quarter-past seven, and the midsummer evening is fine after the wet night and morning, the sun approaching its setting in a sky of gorgeous colours.

The picked and toughened Guard, many of whom stood in the ranks at Austerlitz and Wagram, have been drawn up in three or four échelons, the foremost of which now advances up the slopes to the Allies' position. The others follow at intervals, the drummers beating the "pas de charge."

CHORUS OF RUMOURS (aerial music)

Twice thirty throats of couchant cannonry—
Ranked in a hollow curve, to close their blaze
Upon the advancing files—wait silently
Like swarthy bulls at gaze.

The Guard approaches nearer and more near:
To touch-hole moves each match of smoky sheen:
The ordnance roars: the van-ranks disappear
As if wiped off the scene.

The aged Friant falls as it resounds;
Ney's charger drops—his fifth on this sore day—
Its rider from the quivering body bounds
And forward foots his way.

The cloven columns tread the English height,
Grasp guns, repulse battalions rank by rank,
While horse and foot artillery heavily bite
Into their front and flank.

It nulls the power of a flesh-built frame
To live within that zone of missiles. Back
The Old Guard, staggering, climbs to whence it came.
The fallen define its track!

The second échelon of the Imperial Guard has come up to the assault. Its columns have borne upon HALKETT's right. HALKETT, desperate to keep his wavering men firm, himself seizes and waves the flag of the Thirty-third, in which act he falls wounded. But the men rally. Meanwhile the Fifty-second, covered by the Seventy-first, has advanced across the front, and charges the Imperial Guard on the flank.

The third échelon next arrives at the English lines and squares; rushes through the very focus of their fire, and seeing nothing more in front, raises a shout.

IMPERIAL GUARD

The Emperor! It's victory!

WELLINGTON

Stand up, Guards!
Form line upon the front face of the square!

Two thousand of MAITLAND's Guards, hidden in the hollow roadway, thereupon spring up, form as ordered, and reveal themselves as a fence of levelled firelocks four deep. The flints click in a multitude, the pans flash, and volley after volley is poured into the bear-skinned figures of the massed French, who kill COLONEL D'OYLEY in returning the fire.

WELLINGTON

Now drive the fellows in! They will not stand.

ADAM's brigade, including the Fifty-second under COLONEL COLBORNE, attacks the French guard.

COLBORNE (shouting)

Forward! Right shoulders forward, Fifty-second!

WELLINGTON

Ha, Colborne—you say well! Hie on; hie on!
You'll do it now!

COLBORNE converges on the French guard with the Fifty-second, and the former splits into two as the climax comes. ADAM, MAITLAND, and COLBORNE pursue their advantage. The Imperial columns are broken, and their confusion is increased by grape-shot from BOLTON'S battery.

Campbell, this order next:
Vivian's hussars are to support, and bear
Against the cavalry towards Belle Alliance.
Go—let him know.

Sir C. CAMPBELL departs with the order. Soon VIVIAN'S and VANDELEUR'S light horse are seen advancing, and in due time the French cavalry are rolled back.

WELLINGTON goes in the direction of the hussars with UXBRIDGE. A cannon-shot hisses past.

UXBRIDGE (starting)

I have lost my leg, by God!

WELLINGTON

By God, and have you! Ay—the wind o' the shot
Blew past the withers of my Copenhagen
Like the foul sweeping of a witch's broom.—
Aha—they are giving way!

While UXBRIDGE is being helped to the rear, WELLINGTON makes a sign to SALTOUN, Colonel of the First Footguards.

SALTOUN (shouting)

Boys, now's your time;
Forward and win!

FRENCH VOICES

The Guard gives way—we are beaten!

They recede down the hill, carrying confusion into NAPOLÉON'S centre just as the Prussians press forward at a right angle from the other side of the field. NAPOLÉON is seen standing in the hollow beyond La Haye Sainte, alone, except for the presence of COUNT FLAHAULT, his aide-de-camp. His lips move with a sudden exclamation.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

He says "Now all is lost! The clocks of the world
Strike my last empery-hour."

Towards La Haye Sainte the French of DONZELOT and ALLIX, who are fighting KEMPT, PACK, KRUSE, and LAMBERT, seeing what has happened to the Old and Middle Guard, lose heart and recede likewise; so that the whole French line rolls back like a tide. Simultaneously the Prussians are pressing forward at Papelote and La Haye. The retreat of the French grows into a panic.

FRENCH VOICES (despairingly)

We are betrayed!

WELLINGTON rides at a gallop to the most salient point of the English position, halts, and waves his hat as a signal to all the army. The sign is answered by a cheer along the length of the line.

WELLINGTON

No cheering yet, my lads; but bear ahead
Before the inflamed face of the west out there
Dons darkness. So you'll round your victory!

The few aides that are left unhurt dart hither and thither with this message, and the whole English host and its allies advance in an ordered mass down the hill except some of the artillery, who cannot get their wheels over the bank of corpses in front. Trumpets, drums, and bugles resound with the advance.

The streams of French fugitives as they run are cut down and shot by their pursuers, whose clothes and contracted features are blackened by smoke and cartridge-biting, and soiled with loam and blood. Some French blow out their own brains as they fly. The sun drops below the horizon while the slaughter goes on.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Is this the last Esdraelon of a moil
For mortal man's effacement?

SPIRIT IRONIC

Warfare mere,
Plied by the Managed for the Managers;
To wit: by frenzied folks who profit nought
For those who profit all!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Between the jars
Of these who live, I hear uplift and move
The bones of those who placidly have lain
Within the sacred garths of yon grey fanes—
Nivelles, and Plancenoit, and Braine l'Alleud—
Beneath unmemoried mounds through deedless years.
Their dry jaws quake: "What Sabaoth is this,
That shakes us in our unobtrusive shrouds,
As though our tissues did not yet abhor
The fevered feats of life?"

SPIRIT IRONIC

Mere fancy's feints!
How know the coffined what comes after them,
Even though it whirl them to the Pleiades?—
Turn to the real.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

That hatless, smoke-smirched shape
There in the vale, is still the living Ney,
His sabre broken in his hand, his clothes
Slitten with ploughing ball and bayonet,
One epaulette shorn away. He calls out "Follow!"
And a devoted handful follow him
Once more into the carnage. Hear his voice.

NEY (calling afar)

My friends, see how a Marshal of France can die!

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Alas, not here in battle, something hints,
But elsewhere! . . . Who's the sworded brother-chief
Swept past him in the tumult?

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

D'Erlon he.

Ney cries to him:

NEY

Be sure of this, my friend,
If we don't perish here at English hands,
Nothing is left us but the halter-noose
The Bourbons will provide!

SPIRIT IRONIC

A caustic wit,
And apt, to those who deal in adumbrations!

The brave remnant of the Imperial Guard repulses for a time the English cavalry under Vivian, in which MAJOR HOWARD and LIEUTENANT GUNNING of the Tenth Hussars are shot. But the war-weary French cannot cope with the pursuing infantry, helped by grape-shot from the batteries.

NAPOLÉON endeavours to rally them. It is his last effort as a warrior; and the rally ends feebly.

NAPOLÉON

They are crushed! So it has ever been since Creçy!

He is thrown violently off his horse, and bids his page bring another, which he mounts, and is lost to sight.

SPIRIT OF RUMOUR

He loses his last chance of dying well!

The three or four heroic battalions of the Old and Middle Guard fall back step by step, halting to reform in square when they get badly

broken and shrunk. At last they are surrounded by the English Guards and other foot, who keep firing on them and smiting them to smaller and smaller numbers. GENERAL CAMBRONNE is inside the square.

COLONEL HUGH HALKETT (shouting)

Surrender! And preserve those heroes' lives!

CAMBRONNE (with exasperation)

Mer-r-r-rde! . . . You've to deal with desperates, man, to-day:
Life is a byword here!

Hollow laughter, as from people in hell, comes approvingly from the remains of the Old Guard. The English proceed with their massacre, the devoted band thins and thins, and a ball strikes CAMBRONNE, who falls, and is trampled over.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Observe that all wide sight and self-command
Desert these throngs now driven to demonry
By the Immanent Unrecking. Nought remains
But vindictiveness here amid the strong,
And there amid the weak an impotent rage.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Why prompts the Will so senseless-shaped a doing?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

I have told thee that It works unwittingly,
As one possessed, not judging.

SEMICHORUS I OF IRONIC SPIRITS (aerial music)

Of Its doings if It knew,
What It does It would not do!

SEMICHORUS II

Since It knows not, what far sense
Speeds Its spinnings in the Immense?

SEMICHORUS I

None; a fixed foresightless dream
Is Its whole philosopheme.

SEMICHORUS II

Just so; an unconscious planning,
Like a potter raptly panning!

CHORUS

Are then, Love and Light Its aim—
Good Its glory, Bad Its blame?
Nay; to alter evermore
Things from what they were before.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Your knowings of the Unknowable declared,
Let the last pictures of the Play be bared.

Enter, fighting, more English and Prussians against the French. NEY is caught by the throng and borne ahead. RULLIÈRE hides an eagle beneath his coat and follows NEY. NAPOLÉON is involved none knows where in the crowd of fugitives.

WELLINGTON and BLÜCHER come severally to the view. They meet in the dusk and salute warmly. The Prussian bands strike up "God save the King" as the two shake hands. From his gestures of assent it can be seen that WELLINGTON accepts BLÜCHER'S offer to pursue.

The reds disappear from the sky, and the dusk grows deeper. The action of the battle degenerates to a hunt, and recedes further and further into the distance southward. When the tramplings and shouts of the combatants have dwindled, the lower sounds are noticeable that come from the wounded: hopeless appeals, cries for water, elaborate blasphemies, and impotent execrations of Heaven and earth. In the vast and dusky shambles black slouching shapes begin to move, the plunderers of the dead and dying.

The night grows clear and beautiful, and the moon shines musingly down. But instead of the sweet smell of green herbs and dewy rye as at her last beaming upon these fields, there is now the stench of gunpowder and a muddy stew of crushed crops and gore.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

So hath the Urging Immanence used to-day
Its inadvertent might to field this fray;
And Europe's wormy dynasties rerobe
Themselves in their old gilt, to dazzle anew the globe!

The scene is curtained by a night-mist.[1]

SCENE IX

THE WOOD OF BOSSU

It is midnight. NAPOLÉON enters a glade of the wood, a solitary figure on a jaded horse. The shadows of the boughs travel over his listless form as he moves along. The horse chooses its own path, comes to a standstill, and feeds. The tramp of BERTRAND, SOULT, DROUOT, and LOBAU'S horses, gone forward in hope to find a way of retreat, is heard receding over the hill.

NAPOLÉON (to himself, languidly)

Here should have been some troops of Gérard's corps,
Left to protect the passage of the convoys,
Yet they, too, fail. . . . I have nothing more to lose,
But life!

Flocks of fugitive soldiers pass along the adjoining road without seeing him. NAPOLÉON'S head droops lower and lower as he sits listless in the saddle, and he falls into a fitful sleep. The moon shines upon his face, which is drawn and waxen.

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[1] One of the many Waterloo men known to the writer in his youth, John Bentley of the Fusileer Guards, used to declare that he lay down on the ground in such weariness that when food was brought him he could not eat it, and slept till next morning on an empty stomach. He died at Chelsea Hospital, 187–, aged eighty-six.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

"Si diis immortalibus placet,"—
"Thus is it pleasing to the immortal gods,"
As earthlings used to say. Thus, to this last,
The Will in thee has moved thee, Bonaparte,
As we say now.

NAPOLÉON (starting)

Whose frigid tones are those,
Breaking upon my lurid loneliness
So brusquely? . . . Yet, 'tis true, I have ever known
That such a Will I passively obeyed!

[He drowses again.

SPIRIT IRONIC

Nothing care I for these high-doctrined dreams,
And shape the case in quite a common way,
So I would ask, Ajaccian Bonaparte,
Has all this been worth while?

NAPOLÉON

O hideous hour,
Why am I stung by spectral questionings?
Did not my clouded soul incline to match
Those of the corpses yonder, thou should'st rue
Thy saying, Fiend, whoever thou may'st be! . . .
Why did the death-drops fail to bite me close
I took at Fontainebleau? Had I then ceased,
This deep had been unplumbed; had they but worked,
I had thrown threefold the glow of Hannibal
Down History's dusky lanes!—Is it too late? . . .
Yes. Self-sought death would smoke but damply here!
If but a Kremlin cannon-shot had met me
My greatness would have stood: I should have scored
A vast repute, scarce paralleled in time.
As it did not, the fates had served me best
If in the thick and thunder of to-day,
Like Nelson, Harold, Hector, Cyrus, Saul,

I had been shifted from this jail of flesh,
To wander as a greatened ghost elsewhere.
—Yes, a good death, to have died on yonder field;
But never a ball came passing down my way!
So, as it is, a miss-mark they will dub me;
And yet—I found the crown of France in the mire,
And with the point of my prevailing sword
I picked it up! But for all this and this
I shall be nothing. . . .
To shoulder Christ from out the topmost niche
In human fame, as once I fondly felt,
Was not for me. I came too late in time
To assume the prophet or the demi-god,
A part past playing now. My only course
To make good showance to posterity
Was to implant my line upon the throne.
And how shape that, if now extinction nears?
Great men are meteors that consume themselves
To light the earth. This is my burnt-out hour.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Thou sayest well. Thy full meridian-shine
Was in the glory of the Dresden days,
When well-nigh every monarch throned in Europe
Bent at thy footstool.

NAPOLÉON

Saving always England's—
Rightly dost say "well-nigh."—Not England's,—she
Whose tough, enisled, self-centred, kindless craft
Has tracked me, springed me, thumbed me by the throat,
And made herself the means of mangling me!

SPIRIT IRONIC;

Yea, the dull peoples and the Dynasts both,
Those counter-castes not oft adjustable,

Interests antagonistic, proud and poor,
Have for the nonce been bonded by a wish
To overthrow thee.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Peace. His loaded heart
Bears weight enough for one bruised, blistered while!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Worthless these kneadings of thy narrow thought,
Napoléon; gone thy opportunity!
Such men as thou, who wade across the world
To make an epoch, bless, confuse, appal,
Are in the elemental ages' chart
Like meanest insects on obscurest leaves
But incidents and grooves of Earth's unfolding;
Or as the brazen rod that stirs the fire
Because it must.

The moon sinks, and darkness blots out NAPOLÉON and the scene.

AFTER SCENE

THE OVERWORLD

Enter the Spirit and Chorus of the Years, the Spirit and Chorus of the Pities, the Shade of the Earth, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic with their Choruses, Rumours, Spirit-messengers and Recording Angels.

Europe has now sunk netherward to its far-off position as in the Fore Scene, and it is beheld again as a prone and emaciated figure of which the Alps form the vertebræ, and the branching mountain-chains the ribs, the Spanish Peninsula shaping the head of the écorché. The lowlands look like a grey-green garment half-thrown off, and the sea around like a disturbed bed on which the figure lies.

Spirit of the Years

Thus doth the Great Foresightless mechanize
In blank entrancement now as evermore
Its ceaseless artistries in Circumstance
Of curious stuff and braid, as just forthshown.
Yet but one flimsy riband of Its web
Have we here watched in weaving—web Enorm,
Whose furthest hem and selvage may extend
To where the roars and plashings of the flames
Of earth-invisible suns swell noisily,
And onwards into ghastly gulfs of sky,
Where hideous presences churn through the dark—
Monsters of magnitude without a shape,
Hanging amid deep wells of nothingness.

Yet seems this vast and singular confection
Wherein our scenery glints of scantest size,
Inutile all—so far as reasonings tell.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

Thou arguest still the Inadvertent Mind.—
But, even so, shall blankness be for aye?
Men gained cognition with the flux of time,
And wherefore not the Force informing them,
When far-ranged aions past all fathoming
Shall have swung by, and stand as backward years?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

What wouldst have hoped and had the Will to be?—
How wouldst have pæaned It, if what hadst dreamed
Thereof were truth, and all my showings dream?

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

The Will that fed my hope was far from thine,
One I would thus have hymned eternally:—

SEMICHORUS I OF THE PITIES (aerial music)

To Thee whose eye all Nature owns,
Who hurlest Dynasts from their thrones,[1]
And liftest those of low estate
We sing, with Her men consecrate!

SEMICHORUS II

Yea, Great and Good, Thee, Thee we hail,
Who shak'st the strong, Who shield'st the frail,
Who hadst not shaped such souls as we
If tendermercy lacked in Thee!

SEMICHORUS I

Though times be when the mortal moan
Seems unascending to Thy throne,

[1] καθεῖλε ΔΥΝΆΣΤΑΣ ἀπὸ θρόνων.—Magnificat.

Though seers do not as yet explain
Why Suffering sobs to Thee in vain;

SEMICHORUS II

We hold that Thy unscanted scope
Affords a food for final Hope,
That mild-eyed Prescience ponders nigh
Life's loom, to lull it by-and-by.

SEMICHORUS I

Therefore we quire to highest height
The Wellwiller, the kindly Might
That balances the Vast for weal,
That purges as by wounds to heal.

SEMICHORUS II

The systemed suns the skies enscroll
Obey Thee in their rhythmic roll,
Ride radiantly at Thy command,
Are darkened by Thy Masterhand!

SEMICHORUS I

And these pale panting multitudes
Seen surging here, their moils, their moods,
All shall "fulfil their joy" in Thee,
In Thee abide eternally!

SEMICHORUS II

Exultant adoration give
The Alone, through Whom all living live,
The Alone, in Whom all dying die,
Whose means the End shall justify! Amen.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

So did we evermore sublimely sing;
So would we now, despise thy forthshowing!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Something of difference animates your quiring,
O half-convinced Compassionates and fond,
From chords consistent with our spectacle!
You almost charm my long philosophy
Out of my strong-built thought, and bear me back
To when I thanksgave thus. . . . Ay, start not, Shades;
In the Foregone I knew what dreaming was,
And could let raptures rule! But not so now.
Yea, I psalmed thus and thus. . . . But not so now!

SEMICHORUS I OF THE YEARS (aerial music)

O Immanence, That reasonest not
In putting forth all things begot,
Thou build'st Thy house in space—for what?

SEMICHORUS II

O Loveless, Hateless!—past the sense
Of kindly eyed benevolence,
To what tune danceth this Immense?

SPIRIT IRONIC

For one I cannot answer. But I know
'Tis handsome of our Pities so to sing
The praises of the dreaming, dark, dumb Thing
That turns the handle of this idle Show!

As once a Greek asked I would fain ask too,
Who knows if all the Spectacle be true,

Or an illusion of the gods (the Will,
To wit) some hocus-pocus to fulfil?

SEMICHORUS I OF THE YEARS (aerial music)

Last as first the question rings
Of the Will's long travailings;
Why the All-mover,
Why the All-prover
Ever urges on and measures out the droning tune of Things.[1]

SEMICHORUS II

Heaving dumbly
As we deem,
Moulding numbly
As in dream,
Apprehending not how fare the sentient subjects of Its scheme.

SEMICHORUS I OF THE PITIES

Nay;—shall not Its blindness break?
Yea, must not Its heart awake,
Promptly tending
To Its mending
In a genial germing purpose, and for loving-kindness' sake?

SEMICHORUS II

Should It never
Curb or cure
Aught whatever
Those endure
Whom It quickens, let them darkle to extinction swift and sure.

[1] Hor. *Epis.* i. 12.

CHORUS

But—a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages
Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!

THE END OF "THE DYNASTS"

September 25, 1907.

TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS

AND OTHER VERSES

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION OF TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS

In collecting the following poems to form a volume, I have to thank the editors and proprietors of the periodicals in which certain of them have appeared for permission to reclaim them.

Now that the miscellany is brought together, some lack of concord in pieces written at widely severed dates, and in contrasting moods and circumstances, will be obvious enough. This I cannot help, but the sense of disconnection, particularly in respect of those lyrics penned in the first person, will be immaterial when it is borne in mind that they are to be regarded, in the main, as dramatic monologues by different characters.

As a whole they will, I hope, take the reader forward, even if not far, rather than backward. I should add that some lines in the early-dated poems have been rewritten, though they have been left substantially unchanged.

T. H.

September 1909.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS

THE REVISITATION

As I lay awake at night-time
In an ancient country barrack known to ancient cannoneers,
And recalled the hopes that heralded each seeming brave and bright time
Of my primal purple years,

Much it haunted me that, nigh there,
I had borne my bitterest loss—when One who went, came not again;
In a joyless hour of discord, in a joyless-hued July there—
A July just such as then.

And as thus I brooded longer,
With my faint eyes on the feeble square of wan-lit window frame,
A quick conviction sprung within me, grew, and grew yet stronger,
That the month-night was the same,

Too, as that which saw her leave me
On the rugged ridge of Waterstone, the peewits plaining round;
And a lapsing twenty years had ruled that—as it were to grieve me—
I should near the once-loved ground.

Though but now a war-worn stranger
Chance had quartered here, I rose up and descended to the yard.

All was soundless, save the troopers' horses tossing at the manger,
And the sentry keeping guard.

Through the gateway I betook me
Down the High Street and beyond the lamps, across the battered bridge,
Till the country darkness clasped me and the friendly shine forsook me,
And I bore towards the Ridge,

With a dim unowned emotion
Saying softly: "Small my reason, now at midnight, to be here . . . .
Yet a sleepless swain of fifty with a brief romantic notion
May retrace a track so dear."

Thus I walked with thoughts half-uttered
Up the lane I knew so well, the grey, gaunt, lonely Lane of Slyre;
And at whiles behind me, far at sea, a sullen thunder muttered
As I mounted high and higher.

Till, the upper roadway quitting,
I adventured on the open drouthy downland thinly grassed,
While the spry white scuts of conies flashed before me, earthward flitting,
And an arid wind went past.

Round about me bulged the barrows
As before, in antique silence — immemorial funeral piles—
Where the sleek herds trampled daily the remains of flint-tipt arrows
Mid the thyme and chamomiles;

And the Sarsen stone there, dateless,
On whose breast we had sat and told the zephyrs
many a tender vow,
Held the heat of yester sun, as sank thereon one fated
mateless
From those far fond hours till now.

Maybe flustered by my presence
Rose the peewits, just as all those years back, wailing
soft and loud,
And revealing their pale pinions like a fitful phos-
phorescence
Up against the cope of cloud,

Where their dolesome exclamations
Seemed the voicings of the self-same throats I had
heard when life was green,
Though since that day uncounted frail forgotten
generations
Of their kind had flecked the scene.—

And so, living long and longer
In a past that lived no more, my eyes discerned there,
suddenly,
That a figure broke the skyline — first in vague
contour, then stronger,
And was crossing near to me.

Some long-missed familiar gesture,
Something wonted, struck me in the figure's pause to
list and heed,
Till I fancied from its handling of its loosely wrapping
vesture
That it might be She indeed.

'Twas not reasonless: below there
In the vale, had been her home; the nook might hold
her even yet,

And the downlands were her father's fief; she still
might come and go there;—
So I rose, and said, "Agnette!"

With a little leap, half-frightened,
She withdrew some steps; then letting intuition
smother fear
In a place so long-accustomed, and as one whom
thought enlightened,
She replied: "What—*that* voice?—here!"

"Yes, Agnette!—And did the occasion
Of our marching hither make you think I *might* walk
where we two—"
"O, I often come," she murmured with a moment's
coy evasion,
"('Tis not far),—and—think of you."

Then I took her hand, and led her
To the ancient people's stone whereon I had sat.
There now sat we;
And together talked, until the first reluctant shyness
fled her,
And she spoke confidingly.

"It is *just* as ere we parted!"
Said she, brimming high with joy.—"And when, then,
came you here, and why?"
"—Dear, I could not sleep for thinking of our
trystings when twin-hearted."
She responded, "Nor could I.

"There are few things I would rather
Than be wandering at this spirit-hour—lone-lived, my
kindred dead—
On this wold of well-known feature I inherit from my
father:
Night or day, I have no dread

"O I wonder, wonder whether
Any heartstring bore a signal-thrill between us twain
or no?—
Some such influence can, at times, they say, draw
severed souls together."
I said, "Dear, we'll dream it so."

Each one's hand the other's grasping,
And a mutual forgiveness won, we sank to silent
thought,
A large content in us that seemed our rended lives
reclasping,
And contracting years to nought.

Till I, maybe overweary
From the lateness, and a wayfaring so full of strain
and stress
For one no longer buoyant, to a peak so steep and
eery,
Sank to slow unconsciousness . . .

How long I slept I knew not,
But the brief warm summer night had slid when, to
my swift surprise,
A red upedging sun, of glory chambered mortals
view not,
Was blazing on my eyes,

From the Milton Woods to Dole-Hill
All the spacious landscape lighting, and around about
my feet
Flinging tall thin tapering shadows from the meanest
mound and mole-hill,
And on trails the ewes had beat.

She was sitting still beside me,
Dozing likewise; and I turned to her, to take her
hanging hand;

When, the more regarding, that which like a spectre
shook and tried me
In her image then I scanned ;

That which Time's transforming chisel
Had been tooling night and day for twenty years, and
tooled too well,
In its rendering of crease where curve was, where was
raven, grizzle—
Pits, where peonies once did dwell.

She had wakened, and perceiving
(I surmise) my sigh and shock, my quite involuntary
dismay,
Up she started, and—her wasted figure all throughout
it heaving—
Said, " Ah, yes : I am *thus* by day !

" Can you really wince and wonder
That the sunlight should reveal you such a thing of
skin and bone,
As if unaware a Death's-head must of need lie not far
under
Flesh whose years out-count your own ?

" Yes : that movement was a warning
Of the worth of man's devotion !—Yes, Sir, I am *old*,"
said she,
" And the thing which should increase love turns it
quickly into scorning—
And your new-won heart from me ! "

Then she went, ere I could call her,
With the too proud temper ruling that had parted us
before,
And I saw her form descend the slopes, and smaller
grow and smaller,
Till I caught its course no more . . . .

True; I might have dogged her downward;
—But it *may* be (though I know not) that this trick
on us of Time
Disconcerted and confused me.—Soon I bent my
footsteps townward,
Like to one who had watched a crime.

Well I knew my native weakness,
Well I know it still. I cherished her reproach like
physic-wine,
For I saw in that emaciate shape of bitterness and
bleakness
A nobler soul than mine.

Did I not return, then, ever?—
Did we meet again?—mend all?—Alas, what grey-
head perseveres!—
Soon I got the Route elsewhither.—Since that hour I
have seen her never:
Love is lame at fifty years.

A TRAMPWOMAN'S TRAGEDY

(182–)

I

From Wynyard's Gap the livelong day,
The livelong day,
We beat afoot the northward way
We had travelled times before.
The sun-blaze burning on our backs,
Our shoulders sticking to our packs,
By fosseway, fields, and turnpike tracks
We skirted sad Sedge-Moor.

II

Full twenty miles we jaunted on,
We jaunted on,—
My fancy-man, and jeering John,
And Mother Lee, and I.
And, as the sun drew down to west,
We climbed the toilsome Poldon crest,
And saw, of landskip sights the best,
The inn that beamed thereby.

III

For months we had padded side by side,
Ay, side by side
Through the Great Forest, Blackmoor wide,
And where the Parret ran.

We'd faced the gusts on Mendip ridge,
Had crossed the Yeo unhelped by bridge,
Been stung by every Marshwood midge,
I and my fancy-man.

IV

Lone inns we loved, my man and I,
My man and I;
"King's Stag," "Windwhistle" high and dry,
"The Horse" on Hintock Green,
The cozy house at Wynyard's Gap,
"The Hut" renowned on Bredy Knap,
And many another wayside tap
Where folk might sit unseen.

V

Now as we trudged—O deadly day,
O deadly day!—
I teased my fancy-man in play
And wanton idleness.
I walked alongside jeering John,
I laid his hand my waist upon;
I would not bend my glances on
My lover's dark distress.

VI

Thus Poldon top at last we won,
At last we won,
And gained the inn at sink of sun
Far-famed as "Marshal's Elm."
Beneath us figured tor and lea,
From Mendip to the western sea—
I doubt if finer sight there be
Within this royal realm.

VII

Inside the settle all a-row—
All four a-row
We sat, I next to John, to show
That he had wooed and won.
And then he took me on his knee,
And swore it was his turn to be
My favoured mate, and Mother Lee
Passed to my former one.

VIII

Then in a voice I had never heard,
I had never heard,
My only Love to me: "One word,
My lady, if you please!
Whose is the child you are like to bear?—
His? After all my months o' care?"
God knows 'twas not! But, O despair!
I nodded—still to tease.

IX

Then up he sprung, and with his knife—
And with his knife
He let out jeering Johnny's life,
Yes; there, at set of sun.
The slant ray through the window nigh
Gilded John's blood and glazing eye,
Ere scarcely Mother Lee and I
Knew that the deed was done.

X

The taverns tell the gloomy tale,
The gloomy tale,
How that at Ivel-chester jail
My Love, my sweetheart swung;

Though stained till now by no misdeed
Save one horse ta'en in time o' need;
(Blue Jimmy stole right many a steed
Ere his last fling he flung.)

XI

Thereaft I walked the world alone,
Alone, alone!
On his death-day I gave my groan
And dropt his dead-born child.
'Twas nigh the jail, beneath a tree,
None tending me; for Mother Lee
Had died at Glaston, leaving me
Unfriended on the wild.

XII

And in the night as I lay weak,
As I lay weak,
The leaves a-falling on my cheek,
The red moon low declined—
The ghost of him I'd die to kiss
Rose up and said: "Ah, tell me this!
Was the child mine, or was it his?
Speak, that I rest may find!"

XIII

O doubt not but I told him then,
I told him then,
That I had kept me from all men
Since we joined lips and swore.
Whereat he smiled, and thinned away
As the wind stirred to call up day . .
—'Tis past! And here alone I stray
Haunting the Western Moor.

NOTES.—"Windwhistle" (Stanza IV.). The highness and dryness of Windwhistle Inn was impressed upon the writer two or three

years ago, when, after climbing on a hot afternoon to the beautiful spot near which it stands and entering the inn for tea, he was informed by the landlady that none could be had, unless he would fetch water from a valley half a mile off, the house containing not a drop, owing to its situation. However, a tantalizing row of full barrels behind her back testified to a wetness of a certain sort, which was not at that time desired.

"Marshal's Elm" (Stanza VI.) so picturesquely situated, is no longer an inn, though the house, or part of it, still remains. It used to exhibit a fine old swinging sign.

"Blue Jimmy" (Stanza X.) was a notorious horse-stealer of Wessex in those days, who appropriated more than a hundred horses before he was caught, among others one belonging to a neighbour of the writer's grandfather. He was hanged at the now demolished Ivel-chester or Ilchester jail above mentioned—that building formerly of so many sinister associations in the minds of the local peasantry, and the continual haunt of fever, which at last led to its condemnation. Its site is now an innocent-looking green meadow.

April 1902.

THE TWO ROSALINDS

I

The dubious daylight ended,
And I walked the Town alone, unminding whither bound and why,
As from each gaunt street and gaping square a mist of light ascended
And dispersed upon the sky.

II

Files of evanescent faces
Passed each other without heeding, in their travail, teen, or joy,
Some in void unvisioned listlessness inwrought with pallid traces
Of keen penury's annoy.

III

Nebulous flames in crystal cages
Leered as if with discontent at city movement, murk, and grime,
And as waiting some procession of great ghosts from bygone ages
To exalt the ignoble time.

IV

In a colonnade high-lighted,
By a thoroughfare where stern utilitarian traffic dinned,
On a red and white emblazonment of players and parts, I sighted
The name of "Rosalind,"

V

And her famous mates of "Arden,"
Who observed no stricter customs than "the seasons difference" bade,
Who lived with running brooks for books in Nature's wildwood garden,
And called idleness their trade . . . .

VI

Now the poster stirred an ember
Still remaining from my ardours of some forty years before,
When the selfsame portal on an eve it thrilled me to remember
A like announcement bore;

VII

And expectantly I had entered,
And had first beheld in human mould a Rosalind woo and plead,
On whose transcendent figuring my speedy soul had centred
As it had been she indeed . . . .

VIII

So; all other plans discarding,
I resolved on entrance, bent on seeing what I once had seen,
And approached the gangway of my earlier knowledge, disregarding
The tract of time between.

IX

"The words, sir?" cried a creature
Hovering mid the shine and shade as 'twixt the live world and the tomb;

But the well-known numbers needed not for me a text
or teacher
To revive and re-illume.

X

Then the play. . . . . But how unfitted
Was *this* Rosalind!—a mammet quite to me, in
memories nurst,
And with chilling disappointment soon I sought the
street I had quitted,
To re-ponder on the first.

XI

The hag still hawked,—I met her
Just without the colonnade. "So you don't like her,
sir?" said she.
"Ah—*I* was once that Rosalind!—I acted her—none
better—
Yes—in eighteen sixty-three.

XII

"Thus I won Orlando to me
In my then triumphant days when I had charm and
maidenhood,
Now some forty years ago.—I used to say, *Come woo
me, woo me!*"
And she struck the attitude.

XIII

It was when I had gone there nightly;
And the voice—though raucous now—was yet the old
one.—Clear as noon
My Rosalind was here . . . . Thereon the band
withinside lightly
Beat up a merry tune.

A SUNDAY MORNING TRAGEDY

(*Circa* 186–)

I BORE a daughter flower-fair,
In Pydel Vale, alas for me;
I joyed to mother one so rare,
But dead and gone I now would be.

Men looked and loved her as she grew,
And she was won, alas for me;
She told me nothing, but I knew,
And saw that sorrow was to be.

I knew that one had made her thrall,
A thrall to him, alas for me;
And then, at last, she told me all,
And wondered what her end would be.

She owned that she had loved too well,
Had loved too well, unhappy she,
And bore a secret time would tell,
Though in her shroud she'd sooner be.

I plodded to her sweetheart's door
In Pydel Vale, alas for me:
I pleaded with him, pleaded sore,
To save her from her misery.

He frowned, and swore he could not wed,
Seven times he swore it could not be;
"Poverty's worse than shame," he said,
Till all my hope went out of me.

"I've packed my traps to sail the main"—
Roughly he spake, alas did he—
"Wessex beholds me not again,
'Tis worse than any jail would be!"

—There was a shepherd whom I knew,
A subtle man, alas for me:
I sought him all the pastures through,
Though better I had ceased to be.

I traced him by his lantern light,
And gave him hint, alas for me,
Of how she found her in the plight
That is so scorned in Christendie.

"Is there an herb. . . . ?" I asked. "Or none?"
Yes, thus I asked him desperately.
"—There is," he said; "a certain one. . . ."
Would he had sworn that none knew he!

"To-morrow I will walk your way,"
He hinted low, alas for me.—
Fieldwards I gazed throughout next day;
Now fields I never more would see!

The sunset-shine, as curfew strook,
As curfew strook beyond the lea,
Lit his white smock and gleaming crook,
While slowly he drew near to me.

He pulled from underneath his smock
The herb I sought, my curse to be—
"At times I use it in my flock,"
He said, and hope waxed strong in me.

"'Tis meant to balk ill-motherings"—
(Ill-motherings! Why should they be?)—
"If not, would God have sent such things?"
So spoke the shepherd unto me.

That night I watched the poppling brew,
With bended back and hand on knee:
I stirred it till the dawnlight grew,
And the wind whiffled wailfully.

"This scandal shall be slain," said I,
"That lours upon her innocency:
I'll give all whispering tongues the lie;"—
But worse than whispers was to be.

"Here's physic for untimely fruit,"
I said to her, alas for me,
Early that morn in fond salute;
And in my grave I now would be.

—Next Sunday came, with sweet church chimes,
Next Sunday came, alas for me:
I went into her room betimes;
No more may such a Sunday be!

"Mother, instead of rescue nigh,"
She faintly breathed, alas for me,
"I feel as I were like to die,
And underground soon, soon should be."

From church that noon the people walked
In twos and threes, alas for me,
Showed their new raiment—smiled and talked,
Though sackcloth-clad I longed to be.

Came to my door her lover's friends,
And cheerly cried, alas for me,
"Right glad are we he makes amends,
For never a sweeter bride can be."

My mouth dried, as 'twere scorched within,
Dried at their words, alas for me:
More and more neighbours crowded in,
(O why should mothers ever be!)

"Ha-ha! Such well-kept news!" laughed they,
Yes—so they laughed, alas for me.
"Whose banns were called in church to-day?"—
Christ, how I wished my soul could flee!

"Where is she? O the stealthy miss,"
Still bantered they, alas for me,
"To keep a wedding close as this . . . ."
Ay, Fortune worked thus wantonly!

"But you are pale—you did not know?"
They archly asked, alas for me,
I stammered, "Yes—some days—ago,"
While coffined clay I wished to be.

"'Twas done to please her, we surmise?"
(They spoke quite lightly in their glee)
"Done by him as a fond surprise?"
I thought their words would madden me.

Her lover entered. "Where's my bird?—
My bird—my flower—my picotee?
First time of asking, soon the third!"
Ah, in my grave I well may be.

To me he whispered: "Since your call—"
So spoke he then, alas for me—
"I've felt for her, and righted all."
—I think of it to agony.

"She's faint to-day—tired—nothing more—"
Thus did I lie, alas for me. . . .
I called her at her chamber door
As one who scarce had strength to be.

No voice replied. I went within—
O women! scourged the worst are we. . . .
I shrieked. The others hastened in
And saw the stroke there dealt on me.

A SUNDAY MORNING TRAGEDY

There she lay—silent, breathless, dead,
Stone-dead she lay—wronged, sinless she!—
Ghost-white the cheeks once rosy-red:
Death had took her. Death took not me.

I kissed her colding face and hair,
I kissed her corpse—the bride to be!—
My punishment I cannot bear,
But pray God *not* to pity me.

January 1904.

THE HOUSE OF HOSPITALITIES

HERE we broached the Christmas barrel,
Pushed up the charred log-ends;
Here we sang the Christmas carol,
And called in friends.

Time has tired me since we met here
When the folk now dead were young,
Since the viands were outset here
And quaint songs sung.

And the worm has bored the viol
That used to lead the tune,
Rust eaten out the dial
That struck night's noon.

Now no Christmas brings in neighbours,
And the New Year comes unlit;
Where we sang the mole now labours,
And spiders knit.

Yet at midnight if here walking,
When the moon sheets wall and tree,
I see forms of old time talking,
Who smile on me.

JOHN AND JANE

I

He sees the world as a boisterous place
Where all things bear a laughing face,
And humorous scenes go hourly on,
  Does John.

II

They find the world a pleasant place
Where all is ecstasy and grace,
Where a light has risen that cannot wane,
  Do John and Jane.

III

They see as a palace their cottage-place,
Containing a pearl of the human race,
A hero, maybe, hereafter styled,
  Do John and Jane with a baby-child.

IV

They rate the world as a gruesome place,
Where fair looks fade to a skull's grimace,—
As a pilgrimage they would fain get done—
  Do John and Jane with their worthless son.

THE CURATE'S KINDNESS

A WORKHOUSE IRONY

I

I THOUGHT they'd be strangers aroun' me,
But she's to be there!
Let me jump out o' waggon and go back and drown me
At Pummery or Ten-Hatches Weir.

II

I thought: "Well, I've come to the Union—
The workhouse at last—
After honest hard work all the week, and Communion
O' Zundays, these fifty years past.

III

" 'Tis hard; but," I thought, "never mind it:
There's gain in the end:
And when I get used to the place I shall find it
A home, and may find there a friend.

IV

"Life there will be better than t'other,
For peace is assured.
The men in one wing and their wives in another
Is strictly the rule of the Board."

V

Just then our young Pa'son arriving
Steps up out of breath
To the side o' the waggon wherein we were driving
To Union; and calls out and saith:

VI

"Old folks, that harsh order is altered,
Be not sick of heart!
The Guardians they poohed and they pished and they paltered
When urged not to keep you apart.

VII

"'It is wrong,' I maintained, 'to divide them,
Near forty years wed.'
'Very well, sir. We promise, then, they shall abide them
In one wing together,' they said."

VIII

Then I sank—knew 'twas quite a foredone thing
That misery should be
To the end! . . . To get freed of her there was the one thing
Had made the change welcome to me.

IX

To go there was ending but badly;
'Twas shame and 'twas pain;
'But anyhow," thought I, "thereby I shall gladly
Get free of this forty years' chain."

x

I thought they'd be strangers aroun' me,
But she's to be there!
Let me jump out o' waggon and go back and drown
me
At Pummery or Ten-Hatches Weir.

THE FLIRT'S TRAGEDY

(17—)

HERE alone by the logs in my chamber,
Deserted, decrepit—
Spent flames limning ghosts on the wainscot
Of friends I once knew—

My drama and hers begins weirdly
Its dumb re-enactment,
Each scene, sigh, and circumstance passing
In spectral review.

—Wealth was mine beyond wish when I met her—
The pride of the lowland—
Embowered in Tintinhull Valley
By laurel and yew;

And love lit my soul, notwithstanding
My features' ill favour,
Too obvious beside her perfections
Of line and of hue.

But it pleased her to play on my passion
And whet me to pleadings
That won from her mirthful negations
And scornings undue.

Then I fled her disdains and derisions
To cities of pleasure,
And made me the crony of idlers
In every purlieu.

Of those who lent ear to my story,
A needy Adonis
Gave hint how to grizzle her garden
From roses to rue,

Could his price but be paid for so purging
My scorner of scornings:
Thus tempted, the lust to retaliate
Germed in me and grew.

I clothed him in sumptuous apparel,
Consigned to him coursers,
Meet equipage, liveried attendants
In full retinue.

So dowered, with letters of credit
He wayfared to England,
And spied out the manor she goddessed,
And, handy thereto,

Set to hire him a tenantless mansion
As coign-stone of vantage
For testing what gross adulation
Of beauty could do.

He laboured through mornings and evens,
On new moons and sabbaths,
By wiles to enmesh her attention
In park, path, and pew;

And having afar played upon her,
Advanced his lines nearer,
And boldly outleaping conventions,
Bent briskly to woo.

His gay godlike face, his rare seeming
Anon worked to win her,
And later, at noontides and night-tides
They held rendezvous.

THE FLIRT'S TRAGEDY

His tarriance full spent, he departed
And met me in Venice,
And lines from her told that my jilter
Was stooping to sue.

Not long could be further concealment,
She pled to him humbly:
"By our love and our sin, O protect me;
I fly unto you!"

A mighty remorse overgat me,
I heard her low anguish,
And there in the gloom of the *calle*
My steel ran him through.

A swift push engulphed his hot carrion
Within the canal there—
That still street of waters dividing
The city in two.

—I wandered awhile all unable
To smother my torment,
My brain racked by yells as from Tophet
Of Satan's whole crew.

A month of unrest brought me hovering
At home in her precincts,
To whose hiding-hole local story
Afforded a clue.

Exposed, and expelled by her people,
Afar off in London
I found her alone, in a sombre
And soul-stifling mew.

Still burning to make reparation
I pleaded to wive her,
And father her child, and thus faintly
My mischief undo.

THE FLIRT'S TRAGEDY

She yielded, and spells of calm weather
Succeeded the tempest;
And one sprung of him stood as scion
Of my bone and thew. . . .

But Time unveils sorrows and secrets,
And so it befell now:
By inches the curtain was twitched at,
And slowly undrew.

As we lay, she and I, in the night-time,
We heard the boy moaning:
"O misery mine! My false father
Has murdered my true!"

She gasped: yea, she heard; understood it.
Next day the child fled us;
And nevermore sighted was even
A print of his shoe.

Thenceforward she shunned me, and languished;
Till one day the park-pool
Embraced her fair form, and extinguished
Her eyes' living blue.

—So; ask not what blast may account for
This aspect of pallor,
These bones that just prison within them
Life's poor residue;

But pass by, and leave unregarded
A Cain to his suffering,
For vengeance too dark on the woman
Whose lover he slew.

THE FARM-WOMAN'S WINTER

I

If seasons all were summers,
And leaves would never fall,
And hopping casement-comers
Were foodless not at all,
And fragile folk might be here
That white winds bid depart;
Then one I used to see here
Would warm my wasted heart!

II

One frail, who, bravely tilling
Long hours in gripping gusts,
Was mastered by their chilling,
And now his ploughshare rusts.
So savage winter catches
The breath of limber things,
And what I love he snatches,
And what I love not, brings.

BEREFT

In the black winter morning
No light will be struck near my eyes
While the clock in the stairway is warning
For five, when he used to rise.
Leave the door unbarred,
The clock unwound,
Make my lone bed hard—
Would 'twere underground!

When the summer dawns clearly,
And the appletree-tops seem alight,
Who will undraw the curtain and cheerly
Call out that the morning is bright?

When I tarry at market
No form will cross Durnover Lea
In the gathering darkness, to hark at
Grey's Bridge for the pit-pat o' me.

When the supper crock's steaming,
And the time is the time of his tread,
I shall sit by the fire and wait dreaming
In a silence as of the dead.
Leave the door unbarred,
The clock unwound,
Make my lone bed hard—
Would 'twere underground!

1901.

SHE HEARS THE STORM

THERE was a time in former years—
While my roof-tree was his—
When I should have been distressed by fears
At such a night as this!

I should have murmured anxiously,
"The pricking rain strikes cold;
His road is bare of hedge or tree,
And he is getting old."

But now the fitful chimney-roar,
The drone of Thorncombe trees,
The Froom in flood upon the moor,
The mud of Mellstock Leaze,

The candle slanting sooty wick'd,
The thuds upon the thatch,
The eaves-drops on the window flicked,
The clacking garden-hatch,

And what they mean to wayfarers,
I scarcely heed or mind;
He has won that storm-tight roof of hers
Which Earth grants all her kind.

AUTUMN IN KING'S HINTOCK PARK

HERE by the baring bough
  Raking up leaves,
Often I ponder how
  Springtime deceives,—
I, an old woman now,
  Raking up leaves.

Here in the avenue
  Raking up leaves,
Lords' ladies pass in view,
  Until one heaves
Sighs at life's russet hue,
  Raking up leaves!

Just as my shape you see
  Raking up leaves,
I saw, when fresh and free,
  Those memory weaves
Into grey ghosts by me,
  Raking up leaves.

Yet, Dear, though one may sigh,
  Raking up leaves,
New leaves will dance on high—
  Earth never grieves!—
Will not, when missed am I
  Raking up leaves.

1901.

SHUT OUT THAT MOON

Close up the casement, draw the blind,
Shut out that stealing moon,
She wears too much the guise she wore
Before our lutes were strewn
With years-deep dust, and names we read
On a white stone were hewn.

Step not forth on the dew-dashed lawn
To view the Lady's Chair,
Immense Orion's glittering form,
The Less and Greater Bear:
Stay in; to such sights we were drawn
When faded ones were fair.

Brush not the bough for midnight scents
That come forth lingeringly,
And wake the same sweet sentiments
They breathed to you and me
When living seemed a laugh, and love
All it was said to be.

Within the common lamp-lit room
Prison my eyes and thought;
Let dingy details crudely loom,
Mechanic speech be wrought:
Too fragrant was Life's early bloom,
Too tart the fruit it brought!

1904.

REMINISCENCES OF A DANCING MAN

I

Who now remembers Almack's balls—
Willis's sometime named—
In those two smooth-floored upper halls
For faded ones so famed?
Where as we trod to trilling sound
The fancied phantoms stood around,
Or joined us in the maze,
Of the powdered Dears from Georgian years,
Whose dust lay in sightless sealed-up biers,
The fairest of former days.

II

Who now remembers gay Cremorne,
And all its jaunty jills,
And those wild whirling figures born
Of Jullien's grand quadrilles?
With hats on head and morning coats
There footed to his prancing notes
Our partner-girls and we;
And the gas-jets winked, and the lustres clinked,
And the platform throbbed as with arms enlinked
We moved to the minstrelsy.

III

Who now recalls those crowded rooms
Of old yclept "The Argyll,"
Where to the deep Drum-polka's booms
We hopped in standard style?

Whither have danced those damsels now!
Is Death the partner who doth moue
Their wormy chaps and bare?
Do their spectres spin like sparks within
The smoky halls of the Prince of Sin
To a thunderous Jullien air?

THE DEAD MAN WALKING

They hail me as one living,
But don't they know
That I have died of late years,
Untombed although?

I am but a shape that stands here,
A pulseless mould,
A pale past picture, screening
Ashes gone cold.

Not at a minute's warning,
Not in a loud hour,
For me ceased Time's enchantments
In hall and bower.

There was no tragic transit,
No catch of breath,
When silent seasons inched me
On to this death. . . .

—A Troubadour-youth I rambled
With Life for lyre,
The beats of being raging
In me like fire.

But when I practised eyeing
The goal of men,
It iced me, and I perished
A little then.

THE DEAD MAN WALKING

When passed my friend, my kinsfolk
Through the Last Door,
And left me standing bleakly,
I died yet more;

And when my Love's heart kindled
In hate of me,
Wherefore I knew not, died I
One more degree.

And if when I died fully
I cannot say,
And changed into the corpse-thing
I am to-day;

Yet is it that, though whiling
The time somehow
In walking, talking, smiling,
I live not now.

MORE LOVE LYRICS

1967

In five-score summers! All new eyes,
New minds, new modes, new fools, new wise;
New woes to weep, new joys to prize;

With nothing left of me and you
In that live century's vivid view
Beyond a pinch of dust or two;

A century which, if not sublime,
Will show, I doubt not, at its prime,
A scope above this blinkered time.

—Yet what to me how far above?
For I would only ask thereof
That thy worm should be my worn., Love!

16 Westbourne Park Villas, 1867.

HER DEFINITION

I LINGERED through the night to break of day,
Nor once did sleep extend a wing to me,
Intently busied with a vast array
Of epithets that should outfigure thee.

Full-featured terms—all fitless—hastened by,
And this sole speech remained: "That maiden mine!"—
Debarred from due description then did I
Perceive the indefinite phrase could yet define.

As common chests encasing wares of price
Are borne with tenderness through halls of state
For what they cover, so the poor device
Of homely wording I could tolerate,
Knowing its unadornment held as freight
The sweetest image outside Paradise.

W. P. V.,
Summer: 1866.

THE DIVISION

Rain on the windows, creaking doors,
With blasts that besom the green,
And I am here, and you are there,
And a hundred miles between!

O were it but the weather, Dear,
O were it but the miles
That made up all our severance,
There might be room for smiles.

But that thwart thing betwixt us twain,
Which nothing cleaves or clears,
Is more than distance, Dear, or rain,
And longer than the years!

ON THE DEPARTURE PLATFORM

We kissed at the barrier; and passing through
She left me, and moment by moment got
Smaller and smaller, until to my view
She was but a spot;

A wee white spot of muslin fluff
That down the diminishing platform bore
Through hustling crowds of gentle and rough
To the carriage door.

Under the lamplight's fitful glowers,
Behind dark groups from far and near
Whose interests were apart from ours,
She would disappear,

Then show again, till I ceased to see
That flexible form, that nebulous white;
And she who was more than my life to me
Had vanished quite. . . .

We have penned new plans since that fair fond day,
And in season she will appear again—
Perhaps in the same soft white array—
But never as then!

—"And why, young man, must eternally fly
A joy you'll repeat, if you love her well?"
—O friend, nought happens twice thus; why,
I cannot tell!

IN A CATHEDRAL CITY

THESE people have not heard your name;
No loungers in this placid place
Have helped to bruit your beauty's fame.

The grey Cathedral, towards whose face
Bend eyes untold, has met not yours;
Your shade has never swept its base,

Your form has never darked its doors,
Nor have your faultless feet once thrown
A pensive pit-pat on its floors.

Along the street to maidens known
Blithe lovers hum their tender airs,
But in your praise voice not a tone. . . .

—Since nought bespeaks you here, or bears,
As I, your imprint through and through,
Here might I rest, till my heart shares
The spot's unconsciousness of you!

SALISBURY.

"I SAY I'LL SEEK HER"

I SAY, "I'll seek her side
Ere hindrance interposes";
But eve in midnight closes,
And here I still abide.

When darkness wears I see
Her great eyes in a vision;
They ask, "What indecision
Detains you, Love, from me?—

"The creaking hinge is oiled,
I have unbarred the backway,
But you tread not the trackway;
And shall the thing be spoiled?

"Far cockcrows echo shrill,
The shadows are abating,
And I am waiting, waiting;
But O, you tarry still!"

HER FATHER

I MET her, as we had privily planned,
Where passing feet beat busily:
She whispered: "Father is at hand!
He wished to walk with me."

His presence as he joined us there
Banished our words of warmth away;
We felt, with cloudings of despair,
What Love must lose that day.

Her crimson lips remained unkissed,
Our fingers kept no tender hold,
His lack of feeling made the tryst
Embarrassed, stiff, and cold.

A cynic ghost then rose and said,
"But is his love for her so small
That, nigh to yours, it may be read
As of no worth at all?

"You love her for her pink and white;
But what when their fresh splendours close?
His love will last her in despite
Of Time, and wrack, and foes."

WEYMOUTH.

AT WAKING

When night was lifting,
And dawn had crept under its shade,
Amid cold clouds drifting
Dead-white as a corpse outlaid,
With a sudden scare
I seemed to behold
My Love in bare
Hard lines unfold.

Yea, in a moment,
An insight that would not die
Killed her old endowment
Of charm that had capped all nigh,
Which vanished to none
Like the gilt of a cloud,
And showed her but one
Of the common crowd.

She seemed but a sample
Of earth's poor average kind,
Lit up by no ample
Enrichments of mien or mind.
I covered my eyes
As to cover the thought,
And unrecognize
What the morn had taught.

AT WAKING

O vision appalling
When the one believed-in thing
Is seen falling, falling,
With all to which hope can cling.
Off: it is not true;
For it cannot be
That the prize I drew
Is a blank to me!

WEYMOUTH, 1869.

FOUR FOOTPRINTS

HERE are the tracks upon the sand
Where stood last evening she and I—
Pressed heart to heart and hand to hand;
The morning sun has baked them dry.

I kissed her wet face—wet with rain,
For arid grief had burnt up tears,
While reached us as in sleeping pain
The distant gurgling of the weirs.

"I have married him—yes; feel that ring;
'Tis a week ago that he put it on. . . .
A dutiful daughter does this thing,
And resignation succeeds anon!

"But that I body and soul was yours
Ere he'd possession, he'll never know.
He's a confident man. 'The husband scores,'
He says, 'in the long run' . . . Now, Dear, go!"

I went. And to-day I pass the spot;
It is only a smart the more to endure;
And she whom I held is as though she were not,
For they have resumed their honeymoon tour.

IN THE VAULTED WAY

In the vaulted way, where the passage turned
To the shadowy corner that none could see,
You paused to part from me,—plaintively;
Though overnight had come words that burned
My fond frail happiness out of me.

And then I kissed you,—despite my thought
That our spell must end when reflection came
On what you had deemed me, whose one long aim
Had been to serve you; that what I sought
Lay not in a heart that could breathe such blame.

But yet I kissed you; whereon you again
As of old kissed me. Why, why was it so?
Do you cleave to me after that light-tongued blow?
If you scorned me at eventide, how love then?
The thing is dark, Dear. I do not know.

THE PHANTOM

That was once her casement,
  And the taper nigh,
Shining from within there
  Beckoned, "Here am I!"

Now, as then, I see her
  Moving at the pane;
Ah; 'tis but her phantom
  Borne within my brain!—

Foremost in my vision
  Everywhere goes she;
Change dissolves the landscapes,
  She abides with me.

Shape so sweet and shy, Dear,
  Who can say thee nay?
Never once do I, Dear,
  Wish thy ghost away.

THE END OF THE EPISODE

INDULGE no more may we
In this sweet-bitter pastime:
The love-light shines the last time
Between you, Sweet, and me.

There shall remain no trace
Of what so closely tied us,
And blank as ere love eyed us
Will be our meeting-place.

The flowers and thymy air,
Will they now miss our coming?
The dumbles thin their humming
To find we haunt not there?

Though fervent was our vow,
Though ruddily ran our pleasure,
Bliss has fulfilled its measure,
And sees its sentence now.

Ache deep; but make no moans:
Smile out; but stilly suffer:
The paths of love are rougher
Than thoroughfares of stones.

THE SIGH

Little head against my shoulder,
Shy at first, then somewhat bolder,
And up-eyed;
Till she, with a timid quaver,
Yielded to the kiss I gave her;
But, she sighed.

That there mingled with her feeling
Some sad thought she was concealing
It implied.
—Not that she had ceased to love me,
None on earth she set above me;
But she sighed.

She could not disguise a passion,
Dread, or doubt, in weakest fashion
If she tried:
Nothing seemed to hold us sundered,
Hearts were victors; so I wondered
Why she sighed.

Afterwards I knew her throughly,
And she loved me staunchly, truly,
Till she died;
But she never made confession
Why, at that first sweet concession,
She had sighed.

THE SIGH

It was in our May, remember;
And though now I near November,
    And abide
Till my appointed change, unfretting,
Sometimes I sit half regretting
    That she sighed.

"IN THE NIGHT SHE CAME"

I TOLD her when I left one day
That whatsoever weight of care
Might strain our love, Time's mere assault
Would work no changes there.
And in the night she came to me,
Toothless, and wan, and old,
With leaden concaves round her eyes,
And wrinkles manifold.

I tremblingly exclaimed to her,
"O wherefore do you ghost me thus!
I have said that dull defacing Time
Will bring no dreads to us."
"And is that true of *you*?" she cried
In voice of troubled tune.
I faltered: "Well . . . I did not think
You would test me quite so soon!"

She vanished with a curious smile,
Which told me, plainlier than by word,
That my staunch pledge could scarce beguile
The fear she had averred.
Her doubts then wrought their shape in me,
And when next day I paid
My due caress, we seemed to be
Divided by some shade.

THE CONFORMERS

Yes; we'll wed, my little fay,
And you shall write you mine,
And in a villa chastely gray
We'll house, and sleep, and dine.
But those night-screened, divine,
Stolen trysts of heretofore,
We of choice ecstasies and fine
Shall know no more.

The formal faced cohue
Will then no more upbraid
With smiting smiles and whisperings two
Who have thrown less loves in shade.
We shall no more evade
The searching light of the sun,
Our game of passion will be played,
Our dreaming done.

We shall not go in stealth
To rendezvous unknown,
But friends will ask me of your health,
And you about my own.
When we abide alone,
No leapings each to each,
But syllables in frigid tone
Of household speech.

When down to dust we glide
Men will not say askance,
As now: "How all the country side
Rings with their mad romance!"
But as they graveward glance
Remark: "In them we lose
A worthy pair, who helped advance
Sound parish views."

THE DAWN AFTER THE DANCE

HERE is your parents' dwelling with its curtained windows telling
Of no thought of us within it or of our arrival here;
Their slumbers have been normal after one day more of formal
Matrimonial commonplace and household life's mechanic gear.

I would be candid willingly, but dawn draws on so chillingly
As to render further cheerlessness intolerable now,
So I will not stand endeavouring to declare a day for severing,
But will clasp you just as always—just the olden love avow.

Through serene and surly weather we have walked the ways together,
And this long night's dance this year's-end eve now finishes the spell;
Yet we dreamt us but beginning a sweet sempiternal spinning
Of a cord we have spun to breaking—too intemperately, too well.

Yes; last night we danced I know, Dear, as we did that year ago, Dear,
When a new strange bond between our days was formed, and felt, and heard;

THE DAWN AFTER THE DANCE

Would that dancing were the worst thing from the latest to the first thing
That the faded year can charge us with; but what avails a word!

That which makes man's love the lighter and the woman's burn no brighter
Came to pass with us inevitably while slipped the shortening year. . . .
And there stands your father's dwelling with its blind bleak windows telling
That the vows of man and maid are frail as filmy gossamere.

WEYMOUTH, 1869.

THE SUN ON THE LETTER

I DREW the letter out, while gleamed
The sloping sun from under a roof
Of cloud whose verge rose visibly.

The burning ball flung rays that seemed
Stretched like a warp without a woof
Across the levels of the lea

To where I stood, and where they beamed
As brightly on the page of proof
That she had shown her false to me

As if it had shown her true—had teemed
With passionate thought for my behoof
Expressed with their own ardency!

THE NIGHT OF THE DANCE

The cold moon hangs to the sky by its horn,
And centres its gaze on me;
The stars, like eyes in reverie,
Their westering as for a while forborne,
Quiz downward curiously.

Old Robert hauls the backbrand in,
The green logs steam and spit;
The half-awakened sparrows flit
From the riddled thatch; and owls begin
To whoo from the gable-slit.

Yes; far and nigh things seem to know
Sweet scenes are impending here;
That all is prepared; that the hour is near
For welcomes, fellowships, and flow
Of sally, song, and cheer;

That spigots are pulled and viols strung;
That soon will arise the sound
Of measures trod to tunes renowned;
That She will return in Love's low tongue
My vows as we wheel around.

MISCONCEPTION

I BUSIED myself to find a sure
Snug hermitage
That should preserve my Love secure
From the world's rage;
Where no unseemly saturnals,
Or strident traffic-roars,
Or hum of intervolved cabals
Should echo at her doors.

I laboured that the diurnal spin
Of vanities
Should not contrive to suck her in
By dark degrees,
And cunningly operate to blur
Sweet teachings I had begun;
And then I went full-heart to her
To expound the glad deeds done.

She looked at me, and said thereto
With a pitying smile,
"And *this* is what has busied you
So long a while?
O poor exhausted one, I see
You have worn you old and thin
For naught! Those moils you fear for me
My nature revels in!"

THE VOICE OF THE THORN

I

When the thorn on the down
Quivers naked and cold,
And the mid-aged and old
Pace the path there to town,
In these words dry and drear
It seems to them sighing:
"O winter is trying
To sojourners here!"

II

When it stands fully tressed
On a hot summer day,
And the ewes there astray
Find its shade a sweet rest,
By the breath of the breeze
It inquires of each farer:
"Who would not be sharer
Of shadow with these?"

III

But by day or by night,
And in winter or summer,
Should I be the comer
Along that lone height,
In its voicing to me
Only one speech is spoken:
"Here once was nigh broken
A heart, and by thee."

FROM HER IN THE COUNTRY

I THOUGHT and thought of thy crass clanging town
To folly, till convinced such dreams were ill,
I held my heart in bond, and tethered down
Fancy to where I was, by force of will.

I said: How beautiful are these flowers, this wood,
One little bud is far more sweet to me
Than all man's urban shows; and then I stood
Urging new zest for bird, and bush, and tree;

And strove to feel my nature brought it forth
Of instinct, or no rural maid was I;
But it was vain; for I could not see worth
Enough around to charm a midge or fly,

And mused again on city din and sin,
Longing to madness I might move therein!

16 W. P. V., 1866.

HER CONFESSION

As some bland soul, to whom a debtor says
"I'll now repay the amount I owe to you,"
In inward gladness feigns forgetfulness
That such a payment ever was his due

(His long thought notwithstanding), so did I
At our last meeting waive your proffered kiss
With quick divergent talk of scenery nigh,
By such suspension to enhance my bliss.

And as his looks in consternation fall
When, gathering that the debt is lightly deemed,
The debtor makes as not to pay at all,
So faltered I, when your intention seemed

Converted by my false uneagerness
To putting off for ever the caress.

W. P. V., 1865-67.

TO AN IMPERSONATOR OF ROSALIND

Did he who drew her in the years ago—
Till now conceived creator of her grace—
With telescopic sight high natures know,
Discern remote in Time's untravelled space

Your soft sweet mien, your gestures, as do we,
And with a copyist's hand but set them down,
Glowing yet more to dream our ecstasy
When his Original should be forthshown?

For, kindled by that animated eye,
Whereto all fairnesses about thee brim,
And by thy tender tones, what wight can fly
The wild conviction welling up in him

That he at length beholds woo, parley, plead
The "very, very Rosalind" indeed!

21st April 1867.

TO AN ACTRESS

I READ your name when you were strange to me,
Where it stood blazoned bold with many more;
I passed it vacantly, and did not see
Any great glory in the shape it wore.

O cruelty, the insight barred me then!
Why did I not possess me with its sound,
And in its cadence catch and catch again
Your nature's essence floating therearound?

Could *that* man be this I, unknowing you,
When now the knowing you is all of me,
And the old world of then is now a new,
And purpose no more what it used to be—
A thing of formal journeywork, but due
To springs that then were sealed up utterly?

1867.

THE MINUTE BEFORE MEETING

The grey gaunt days dividing us in twain
Seemed hopeless hills my strength must faint to climb,
But they are gone; and now I would detain
The few clock-beats that part us; rein back Time,

And live in close expectance never closed
In change for far expectance closed at last,
So harshly has expectance been imposed
On my long need while these slow blank months passed.

And knowing that what is now about to be
Will all *have been* in O, so short a space!
I read beyond it my despondency
When more dividing months shall take its place,
Thereby denying to this hour of grace
A full-up measure of felicity.

1871.

HE ABJURES LOVE

At last I put off love,
For twice ten years
The daysman of my thought,
And hope, and doing;
Being ashamed thereof,
And faint of fears
And desolations, wrought
In his pursuing,

Since first in youthtime those
Disquietings
That heart-enslavement brings
To hale and hoary,
Became my housefellows,
And, fool and blind,
I turned from kith and kind
To give him glory.

I was as children be
Who have no care;
I did not think or sigh,
I did not sicken;
But lo, Love beckoned me,
And I was bare,
And poor, and starved, and dry,
And fever-stricken.

Too many times ablaze
With fatuous fires,
Enkindled by his wiles
To new embraces,

HE ABJURES LOVE

Did I, by wilful ways
  And baseless ires,
Return the anxious smiles
  Of friendly faces.

No more will now rate I
  The common rare,
The midnight drizzle dew,
  The gray hour golden,
The wind a yearning cry,
  The faulty fair,
Things dreamt, of comelier hue
  Than things beholden! . . .

—I speak as one who plumbs
  Life's dim profound,
One who at length can sound
  Clear views and certain.
But—after love what comes?
  A scene that lours,
A few sad vacant hours,
  And then, the Curtain.

1883.

A SET OF COUNTRY SONGS

LET ME ENJOY

(MINOR KEY)

I

Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight.

II

About my path there flits a Fair,
Who throws me not a word or sign;
I'll charm me with her ignoring air,
And laud the lips not meant for mine.

III

From manuscripts of moving song
Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown,
I'll pour out raptures that belong
To others, as they were my own.

IV

And some day hence, toward Paradise
And all its blest—if such should be—
I will lift glad, afar-off eyes,
Though it contain no place for me.

AT CASTERBRIDGE FAIR

I

The Ballad-Singer

Sing, Ballad-singer, raise a hearty tune;
Make me forget that there was ever a one
I walked with in the meek light of the moon
When the day's work was done.

Rhyme, Ballad-rhymer, start a country song;
Make me forget that she whom I loved well
Swore she would love me dearly, love me long,
Then—what I cannot tell!

Sing, Ballad-singer, from your little book;
Make me forget those heart-breaks, achings, fears;
Make me forget her name, her sweet sweet look—
Make me forget her tears.

II

Former Beauties

These market-dames, mid-aged, with lips thin-drawn,
And tissues sere,
Are they the ones we loved in years agone,
And courted here?

Are these the muslined pink young things to whom
    We vowed and swore
In nooks on summer Sundays by the Froom,
    Or Budmouth shore?

Do they remember those gay tunes we trod
    Clasped on the green;
Aye; trod till moonlight set on the beaten sod
    A satin sheen?

They must forget, forget! They cannot know
    What once they were,
Or memory would transfigure them, and show
    Them always fair.

III

After the Club-Dance

Black'on frowns east on Maidon,
  And westward to the sea,
But on neither is his frown laden
  With scorn, as his frown on me!

At dawn my heart grew heavy,
  I could not sip the wine,
I left the jocund bevy
  And that young man o' mine.

The roadside elms pass by me,—
  Why do I sink with shame
When the birds a-perch there eye me?
  They, too, have done the same!

IV

The Market-Girl

Nobody took any notice of her as she stood on the causey kerb,
All eager to sell her honey and apples and bunches of garden herb;
And if she had offered to give her wares and herself with them too that day,
I doubt if a soul would have cared to take a bargain so choice away.

But chancing to trace her sunburnt grace that morning as I passed nigh,
I went and I said, "Poor maidy dear!—and will none of the people buy?"
And so it began; and soon we knew what the end of it all must be,
And I found that though no others had bid, a prize had been won by me.

V

The Inquiry

And are ye one of Hermitage—
Of Hermitage, by Ivel Road,
And do ye know, in Hermitage
A thatch-roofed house where sengreens grow?

And does John Waywood live there still—
He of the name that there abode
When father hurdled on the hill
Some fifteen years ago?

Does he now speak o' Patty Beech,
The Patty Beech he used to—see,
Or ask at all if Patty Beech
Is known or heard of out this way?
—Ask ever if she's living yet,
And where her present home may be,
And how she bears life's fag and fret
After so long a day?

In years agone at Hermitage
This faded face was counted fair,
None fairer; and at Hermitage
We swore to wed when he should thrive.
But never a chance had he or I,
And waiting made his wish outwear,
And Time, that dooms man's love to die,
Preserves a maid's alive.

VI

A Wife Waits

Will's at the dance in the Club-room below,
Where the tall liquor-cups foam;
I on the pavement up here by the Bow,
Wait, wait, to steady him home.

Will and his partner are treading a tune,
Loving companions they be;
Willy before we were married in June,
Said he loved no one but me;

Said he would let his old pleasures all go
Ever to live with his Dear.
Will's at the dance in the Club-room below,
Shivering I wait for him here.

NOTE—"The Bow" (line 3). The old name for the curved corner by the cross-streets in the middle of Casterbridge.

VII

AFTER THE FAIR

THE singers are gone from the Cornmarket-place
With their broadsheets of rhymes,
The street rings no longer in treble and bass
With their skits on the times,
And the Cross, lately thronged, is a dim naked space
That but echoes the stammering chimes.

From Clock-corner steps, as each quarter ding-dongs,
Away the folk roam
By the "Hart" and Grey's Bridge into byways and "drongs,"
Or across the ridged loam;
The younger ones shrilling the lately heard songs,
The old saying, "Would we were home."

The shy-seeming maiden so mute in the fair
Now rattles and talks,
And that one who looked the most swaggering there
Grows sad as she walks,
And she who seemed eaten by cankering care
In statuesque sturdiness stalks.

And midnight clears High Street of all but the ghosts
Of its buried burghees,
From the latest far back to those old Roman hosts
Whose remains one yet sees,
Who loved, laughed, and fought, hailed their friends, drank their toasts
At their meeting-times here, just as these!

1902.

NOTE.—"The Chimes" (line 6) will be listened for in vain here at midnight now, having been abolished some years ago.

THE DARK-EYED GENTLEMAN

I

I PITCHED my day's leazings in Crimmercrock Lane,
To tie up my garter and jog on again,
When a dear dark-eyed gentleman passed there and said,
In a way that made all o' me colour rose-red,
"What do I see—
O pretty knee!"
And he came and he tied up my garter for me.

II

'Twixt sunset and moonrise it was, I can mind:
Ah, 'tis easy to lose what we nevermore find!—
Of the dear stranger's home, of his name, I knew nought,
But I soon knew his nature and all that it brought.
Then bitterly
Sobbed I that he
Should ever have tied up my garter for me!

III

Yet now I've beside me a fine lissom lad,
And my slip's nigh forgot, and my days are not sad;
My own dearest joy is he, comrade, and friend,
He it is who safe-guards me, on him I depend;
No sorrow brings he,
And thankful I be
That his daddy once tied up my garter for me!

NOTE.—"Leazings" (line 1).—Bundle of gleaned corn.

TO CARREY CLAVEL

You turn your back, you turn your back,
And never your face to me,
Alone you take your homeward track,
And scorn my company.

What will you do when Charley's seen
Dewbeating down this way?
—You'll turn your back as now, you mean?
Nay, Carrey Clavel, nay!

You'll see none's looking; put your lip
Up like a tulip, so;
And he will coll you, bend, and sip:
Yes, Carrey, yes; I know!

THE ORPHANED OLD MAID

I WANTED to marry, but father said, "No—
'Tis weakness in women to give themselves so;
If you care for your freedom you'll listen to me,
Make a spouse in your pocket, and let the men be.

I spake on't again and again: father cried,
"Why—if you go husbanding, where shall I bide?
For never a home's for me elsewhere than here!"
And I yielded; for father had ever been dear.

But now father's gone, and I feel growing old,
And I'm lonely and poor in this house on the wold,
And my sweetheart that was found a partner elsewhere,
And nobody flings me a thought or a care.

THE SPRING CALL

Down Wessex way, when spring's a-shine,
The blackbird's "pret-ty de-urr!"
In Wessex accents marked as mine
Is heard afar and near.

He flutes it strong, as if in song
No R's of feebler tone
Than his appear in "pretty dear,"
Have blackbirds ever known.

Yet they pipe "prattie deerh!" I glean,
Beneath a Scottish sky,
And "pehty de-aw!" amid the treen
Of Middlesex or nigh.

While some folk say—perhaps in play—
Who know the Irish isle,
'Tis "purrity dare!" in treeland there
When songsters would beguile.

Well: I'll say what the listening birds
Say, hearing "pret-ty de-urr!"—
However strangers sound such words,
That's how we sound them here.

Yes, in this clime at pairing time,
As soon as eyes can see her
At dawn of day, the proper way
To call is "pret-ty de-urr!"

JULIE-JANE

Sing; how 'a would sing!
How 'a would raise the tune
When we rode in the waggon from harvesting
By the light o' the moon!

Dance; how 'a would dance!
If a fiddlestring did but sound
She would hold out her coats, give a slanting glance,
And go round and round.

Laugh; how 'a would laugh!
Her peony lips would part
As if none such a place for a lover to quaff
At the deeps of a heart.

Julie, O girl of joy,
Soon, soon that lover he came.
Ah, yes; and gave thee a baby-boy,
But never his name . . . .

—Tolling for her, as you guess;
And the baby too . . . . 'Tis well.
You knew her in maidhood likewise?—Yes,
That's her burial bell.

"I suppose," with a laugh she said,
"I should blush that I'm not a wife;
But how can it matter, so soon to be dead,
What one does in life!"

JULIE-JANE

When we sat making the mourning
By her death-bed side, said she,
"Dears, how can you keep from your lovers, adorning
In honour of me!"

Bubbling and brightsome eyed!
But now—O never again.
She chose her bearers before she died
From her fancy-men.

NOTE.—It is, or was, a common custom in Wessex, and probably other country places, to prepare the mourning beside the death-bed, the dying person sometimes assisting, who also selects his or her bearers on such occasions.

"Coats" (line 7).—Old name for petticoats.

NEWS FOR HER MOTHER

I

One mile more is
Where your door is
Mother mine!—
Harvest's coming,
Mills are strumming,
Apples fine,
And the cider made to-year will be as wine.

II

Yet, not viewing
What's a-doing
Here around
Is it thrills me,
And so fills me
That I bound
Like a ball or leaf or lamb along the ground.

III

Tremble not now
At your lot now
Silly soul!
Hosts have sped them
Quick to wed them,
Great and small,
Since the first two sighing half-hearts made a whole.

IV

Yet I wonder,
Will it sunder
Her from me?
Will she guess that
I said "Yes,"—that
His I'd be,
Ere I thought she might not see him as I see!

V

Old brown gable,
Granary, stable,
Here you are!
O my mother,
Can another
Ever bar
Mine from thy heart, make thy nearness seem afar?

THE FIDDLER

The fiddler knows what's brewing
To the lilt of his lyric wiles:
The fiddler knows what rueing
Will come of this night's smiles!

He sees couples join them for dancing,
And afterwards joining for life,
He sees them pay high for their prancing
By a welter of wedded strife.

He twangs: "Music hails from the devil,
Though vaunted to come from heaven,
For it makes people do at a revel
What multiplies sins by seven.

"There's many a heart now mangled,
And waiting its time to go,
Whose tendrils were first entangled
By my sweet viol and bow!"

THE HUSBAND'S VIEW

"Can anything avail
Beldame, for hidden grief?—
Listen: I'll tell the tale,
It may bring faint relief!—

"I came where I was not known,
In hope to flee my sin;
And walking forth alone
A young man said, 'Good e'en.'

"In gentle voice and true
He asked to marry me;
'You only—only you
Fulfil my dream!' said he.

"We married o' Monday morn,
In the month of hay and flowers;
My cares were nigh forsworn,
And perfect love was ours.

"But ere the days are long
Untimely fruit will show;
My Love keeps up his song,
Undreaming it is so.

"And I awake in the night,
And think of months gone by,
And of that cause of flight
Concealed from my Love's eye.

THE HUSBAND'S VIEW

"Discovery borders near,
And then! . . . But something stirred?—
My husband—he is here!
Heaven—has he overheard?"—

"Yes; I have heard, sweet Nan;
I have known it all the time.
I am not a particular man;
Misfortunes are no crime:

"And what with our serious need
Of sons for soldiering,
That accident, indeed,
To maids, is a useful thing!"

ROSE-ANN

Why didn't you say you was promised, Rose-Ann,
  Why didn't you name it to me,
Ere ever you tempted me hither, Rose-Ann,
  So often, so wearifully?

O why did you let me be near 'ee, Rose-Ann,
  Talking things about wedlock so free,
And never by nod or by whisper, Rose-Ann,
  Give a hint that it wasn't to be?

Down home I was raising a flock of stock ewes,
  Cocks and hens, and wee chickens by scores,
And lavendered linen all ready to use,
  A-dreaming that they would be yours.

Mother said: "She's a sport-making maiden, my son;"
  And a pretty sharp quarrel had we;
O why do you prove by this wrong you have done
  That I saw not what mother could see?

Never once did you say you was promised, Rose-Ann
  Never once did I dream it to be;
And it cuts to the heart to be treated, Rose-Ann,
  As you in your scorning treat me!

THE HOMECOMING

Gruffly growled the wind on Toller downland broad and bare,
And lonesome was the house, and dark; and few came there.

"Now don't ye rub your eyes so red; we're home and have no cares;
Here's a skimmer-cake for supper, peckled onions, and some pears;
I've got a little keg o' summat strong, too, under stairs:
—What, slight your husband's victuals? Other brides can tackle theirs!"

The wind of winter mooed and mouthed their chimney like a horn,
And round the house and past the house 'twas leafless and lorn.

"But my dear and tender poppet, then, how came ye to agree
In Ivel church this morning? Sure, there-right you married me!"
—"Hoo-hoo!—I don't know—I forgot how strange and far 'twould be,
An' I wish I was at home again with dear daddee!"

Gruffly growled the wind on Toller downland broad and bare,
And lonesome was the house and dark; and few came there.

"I didn't think such furniture as this was all you'd
own,
And great black beams for ceiling, and a floor o'
wretched stone,
And nasty pewter platters, horrid forks of steel and
bone,
And a monstrous crock in chimney. 'Twas to me
quite unbeknown!"

Rattle rattle went the door; down flapped a cloud of
smoke,
As shifting north the wicked wind assayed a smarter
stroke.

"Now sit ye by the fire, poppet; put yourself at ease:
And keep your little thumb out of your mouth, dear,
please!
And I'll sing to 'ee a pretty song of lovely flowers and
bees,
And happy lovers taking walks within a grove o'
trees."

Gruffly growled the wind on Toller Down, so bleak and
bare,
And lonesome was the house, and dark; and few came
there.

"Now, don't ye gnaw your handkercher; 'twill hurt
your little tongue,
And if you do feel spitish, 'tis because ye are over
young;
But you'll be getting older, like us all, ere very long,
And you'll see me as I am—a man who never did 'ee
wrong."

Straight from Whit'sheet Hill to Benvill Lane the
blusters pass,
Hitting hedges, milestones, handposts, trees, and tufts of
grass.

"Well, had I on'y known, my dear, that this was how you'd be,
I'd have married her of riper years that was so fond of me.
But since I can't, I've half a mind to run away to sea,
And leave 'ee to go barefoot to your d—d daddee!"

Up one wall and down the other—past each window-pane—
Prance the gusts, and then away down Crimmercrock's long lane.

"I—I—don't know what to say to't, since your wife I've vowed to be;
And as 'tis done, I s'pose here I must bide—poor me!
Aye—as you are ki-ki-kind, I'll try to live along with 'ee,
Although I'd fain have stayed at home with dear daddee!"

Gruffly growled the wind on Toller Down, so bleak and bare,
And lonesome was the house and dark; and few came there.

"That's right, my Heart! And though on haunted Toller Down we be,
And the wind swears things in chimley, we'll to supper merrily!
So don't ye tap your shoe so pettish-like; but smile at me,
And ye'll soon forget to sock and sigh for dear daddee!"

December 1901

PIECES OCCASIONAL AND VARIOUS

A CHURCH ROMANCE

(MELLSTOCK, *circa* 1835)

SHE turned in the high pew, until her sight
Swept the west gallery, and caught its row
Of music-men with viol, book, and bow
Against the sinking sad tower-window light.

She turned again; and in her pride's despite
One strenuous viol's inspirer seemed to throw
A message from his string to her below,
Which said: "I claim thee as my own forthright!"

Thus their hearts' bond began, in due time signed,
And long years thence, when Age had scared Romance,
At some old attitude of his or glance
That gallery-scene would break upon her mind,
With him as minstrel, ardent, young, and trim,
Bowing "New Sabbath" or "Mount Ephraim."

THE RASH BRIDE

An Experience of the Mellstock Quire

I

We Christmas-carolled down the Vale, and up the Vale, and round the Vale,
We played and sang that night as we were yearly wont to do—
A carol in a minor key, a carol in the major D,
Then at each house: "Good wishes: many Christmas joys to you!"

II

Next, to the widow's John and I and all the rest drew on. And I
Discerned that John could hardly hold the tongue of him for joy.
The widow was a sweet young thing whom John was bent on marrying,
And quiring at her casement seemed romantic to the boy.

III

"She'll make reply, I trust," said he, "to our salute? She must!" said he,
"And then I will accost her gently—much to her surprise!—
For knowing not I am with you here, when I speak up and call her dear
A tenderness will fill her voice, a bashfulness her eyes."

IV

So, by her window-square we stood; ay, with our lanterns there we stood,
And he along with us,—not singing, waiting for a sign;
And when we'd quired her carols three a light was lit and out looked she,
A shawl about her bedgown, and her colour red as wine.

V

And sweetly then she bowed her thanks, and smiled, and spoke aloud her thanks;
When lo, behind her back there, in the room, a man appeared.
I knew him—one from Woolcomb way—Giles Swetman—honest as the day,
But eager, hasty; and I felt that some strange trouble neared.

VI

"How comes he there? . . . Suppose," said we, "she's wed!" said we. "Who knows?" said we.
—"She married yester-morning—only mother yet has known
The secret o't!" quoth one small boy. "But now I've told, let's wish 'em joy!"
A heavy fall aroused us: John had gone down like a stone.

VII

We rushed to him and caught him round, and lifted him, and brought him round,
When, hearing something wrong had happened, oped the window she:
"Has one of you fallen ill?" she asked, "by these night labours overtasked?"
None answered. That she'd done poor John a cruel turn felt we.

VIII

Till up spoke Michael: "Fie, young dame! You've
broke your promise, sly young dame,
By forming this new tie, young dame, and jilting John
so true,
Who trudged to-night to sing to 'ee because he thought
he'd bring to 'ee
Good wishes as your coming spouse. May ye such
trifling rue!"

IX

Her man had said no word at all; but being behind
had heard it all,
And now cried: "Neighbours, on my soul I knew not
'twas like this!"
And then to her: "If I had known you'd had in tow
not me alone,
No wife should you have been of mine. It is a dear
bought bliss!"

X

She changed death-white, and heaved a cry: we'd
never heard so grieved a cry
As came from her at this from him: heartbroken quite
seemed she;
And suddenly, as we looked on, she turned, and rushed;
and she was gone,
Whither, her husband, following after, knew not; nor
knew we.

XI

We searched till dawn about the house; within the
house, without the house.
We searched among the laurel boughs that grew
beneath the wall,
And then among the crocks and things, and stores for
winter junketings,
In linhay, loft, and dairy; but we found her not at all.

XII

Then John rushed in: "O friends," he said, "hear
this, this, this!" and bends his head:
"I've—searched round by the — *well*, and find the
cover open wide!
I am fearful that—I can't say what. . . . Bring lanterns,
and some cords to knot."
We did so, and we went and stood the deep dark hole
beside.

XIII

And then they, ropes in hand, and I—ay, John, and
all the band, and I
Let down a lantern to the depths—some hundred feet
and more;
It glimmered like a fog-dimmed star; and there, beside
its light, afar,
White drapery floated, and we knew the meaning that
it bore.

XIV

The rest is naught. . . . We buried her o' Sunday.
Neighbours carried her;
And Swetman—he who'd married her—now miser-
ablest of men,
Walked mourning first; and then walked John; just
quivering, but composed anon;
And we the quire formed round the grave, as was the
custom then.

XV

Our old bass player, as I recall—his white hair blown
—but why recall!—
His viol upstrapped, bent figure—doomed to follow
her full soon—
Stood bowing, pale and tremulous; and next to him
the rest of us. . . .
We sang the Ninetieth Psalm to her—set to Saint
Stephen's tune.

THE DEAD QUIRE

I

Beside the Mead of Memories,
Where Church-way mounts to Moaning Hill,
The sad man sighed his phantasies :
He seems to sigh them still.

II

"'Twas the Birth-tide Eve, and the hamleteers
Made merry with ancient Mellstock zest,
But the Mellstock quire of former years
Had entered into rest.

III

"Old Dewy lay by the gaunt yew tree,
And Reuben and Michael a pace behind,
And Bowman with his family
By the wall that the ivies bind.

IV

"The singers had followed one by one,
Treble, and tenor, and thorough-bass ;
And the worm that wasteth had begun
To mine their mouldering place.

V

"For two-score years, ere Christ-day light,
Mellstock had throbbed to strains from these ;
But now there echoed on the night
No Christmas harmonies.

VI

"Three meadows off, at a dormered inn,
The youth had gathered in high carouse,
And, ranged on settles, some therein
Had drunk them to a drowse.

VII

"Loud, lively, reckless, some had grown,
Each dandling on his jigging knee
Eliza, Dolly, Nance, or Joan—
Livers in levity.

VIII

"The taper flames and hearthfire shine
Grew smoke-hazed to a lurid light,
And songs on subjects not divine
Were warbled forth that night,

IX

"Yet many were sons and grandsons here
Of those who, on such eves gone by,
At that still hour had throated clear
Their anthems to the sky.

X

"The clock belled midnight; and ere long
One shouted, 'Now 'tis Christmas morn;
Here's to our women old and young,
And to John Barleycorn!'

XI

"They drink the toast, and shout again:
The pewter-ware rings back the boom,
And for a breath-while follows then
A silence in the room.

XII

"When nigh without, as in old days,
The ancient quire of voice and string
Seemed singing words of prayer and praise
As they had used to sing.

XIII

"*While shepherds watch'd their flocks by night*,—
Thus swells the long familiar sound
In many a quaint symphonic flight—
To, *Glory shone around.*

XIV

"The sons defined their fathers' tones,
The widow his whom she had wed,
And others in the minor moans
The viols of the dead.

XV

"Something supernal has the sound
As verse by verse the strain proceeds,
And stilly staring on the ground
Each roysterer holds and heeds.

XVI

"Towards its chorded closing bar
Plaintively, thinly, waned the hymn,
Yet lingered, like the notes afar
Of banded seraphim.

XVII

"With brows abashed, and reverent tread,
The hearkeners sought the tavern door:
But nothing, save wan moonlight, spread
The empty highway o'er.

XVIII

"While on their hearing fixed and tense
The aerial music seemed to sink,
As it were gently moving thence
Along the river brink.

XIX

"Then did the Quick pursue the Dead
By crystal Froom that crinkles there;
And still the viewless quire ahead
Voiced the old holy air.

XX

"By Bank-walk wicket, brightly bleached,
It passed, and 'twixt the hedges twain,
Dogged by the living; till it reached
The bottom of Church Lane.

XXI

"There, at the turning, it was heard
Drawing to where the churchyard lay:
But when they followed thitherward
It smalled, and died away.

XXII

"Each headstone of the quire, each mound,
Confronted them beneath the moon;
But no more floated therearound
That ancient Birth-night tune.

XXIII

"There Dewy lay by the gaunt yew tree,
There Reuben and Michael, a pace behind,
And Bowman with his family
By the wall that the ivies bind. . . .

XXIV

"As from a dream each sobered son
Awoke, and musing reached his door:
'Twas said that of them all, not one
Sat in a tavern more."

XXV

—The sad man ceased; and ceased to heed
His listener, and crossed the leaze
From Moaning Hill towards the mead—
The Mead of Memories.

1897.

THE CHRISTENING

Whose child is this they bring
Into the aisle?—
At so superb a thing
The congregation smile
And turn their heads awhile.

Its eyes are blue and bright,
Its cheeks like rose;
Its simple robes unite
Whitest of calicoes
With lawn, and satin bows.

A pride in the human race
At this paragon
Of mortals, lights each face
While the old rite goes on;
But ah, they are shocked anon.

What girl is she who peeps
From the gallery stair,
Smiles palely, redly weeps,
With feverish furtive air
As though not fitly there?

"I am the baby's mother;
This gem of the race
The decent fain would smother,
And for my deep disgrace
I am bidden to leave the place."

THE CHRISTENING

"Where is the baby's father?"—
"In the woods afar.
He says there is none he'd rather
Meet under moon or star
Than me, of all that are.

"To clasp me in lovelike weather,
Wish fixing when,
He says: To be together
At will, just now and then,
Makes him the blest of men;

"But chained and doomed for life
To slovening
As vulgar man and wife,
He says, is another thing:
Yea: sweet Love's sepulchring!"

1904.

A DREAM QUESTION

"It shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine."—Micah iii. 6.

I ASKED the Lord: "Sire, is this true
Which hosts of theologians hold,
That when we creatures censure you
For shaping griefs and ails untold
(Deeming them punishments undue)
You rage, as Moses wrote of old?

When we exclaim: "Beneficent
He is not, for he orders pain,
Or, if so, not omnipotent:
To a mere child the thing is plain!"
Those who profess to represent
You, cry out: "Impious and profane!"

He: "Save me from my friends, who deem
That I care what my creatures say!
Mouth as you list: sneer, rail, blaspheme,
O manikin, the livelong day,
Not one grief-groan or pleasure-gleam
Will you increase or take away.

"Why things are thus, whoso derides,
May well remain my secret still . . .
A fourth dimension, say the guides,
To matter is conceivable.
Think some such mystery resides
Within the ethic of my will."

BY THE BARROWS

Not far from Mellstock—so tradition saith—
Where barrows, bulging as they bosoms were
Of Multimammia stretched supinely there,
Catch night and noon the tempest's wanton breath,

A battle, desperate doubtless unto death,
Was one time fought. The outlook, lone and bare,
The towering hawk and passing raven share,
And all the upland round is called "The He'th."

Here once a woman, in our modern age,
Fought singlehandedly to shield a child—
One not her own—from a man's senseless rage.
And to my mind no patriots' bones there piled
So consecrate the silence as her deed
Of stoic and devoted self-unheed.

A WIFE AND ANOTHER

"War ends, and he's returning
Early; yea,
The evening next to-morrow's!"—
—This I say
To her, whom I suspiciously survey,

Holding my husband's letter
To her view.—
She glanced at it but lightly,
And I knew
That one from him that day had reached her too.

There was no time for scruple;
Secretly
I filched her missive, conned it,
Learnt that he
Would lodge with her ere he came home to me.

To reach the port before her,
And, unscanned,
There wait to intercept them
Soon I planned:
That, in her stead, *I* might before him stand.

So purposed, so effected;
At the inn
Assigned, I found her hidden:—
O that sin
Should bear what she bore when I entered in!

A WIFE AND ANOTHER

Her heavy lids grew laden
With despairs,
Her lips made soundless movements
Unawares,
While I peered at the chamber hired as theirs.

And as beside its doorway,
Deadly hued,
One inside, one withoutside
We two stood,
He came—my husband—as she knew he would.

No pleasurable triumph
Was that sight!
The ghastly disappointment
Broke them quite.
What love was theirs, to move them with such might!

"Madam, forgive me!" said she,
Sorrow bent,
"A child—I soon shall bear him . . .
Yes—I meant
To tell you—that he won me ere he went."

Then, as it were, within me
Something snapped,
As if my soul had largened:
Conscience-capped,
I saw myself the snarer—them the trapped.

"My hate dies, and I promise,
Grace-beguiled,"
I said, "to care for you, be
Reconciled;
And cherish, and take interest in the child."

Without more words I pressed him
Through the door

Within which she stood, powerless
To say more,
And closed it on them, and downstairward bore.

"He joins his wife—my sister,"
I, below,
Remarked in going—lightly—
Even as though
All had come right, and we had arranged it so . . .

As I, my road retracing,
Left them free,
The night alone embracing
Childless me,
I held I had not stirred God wrothfully.

THE ROMAN ROAD

THE Roman Road runs straight and bare
As the pale parting-line in hair
Across the heath. And thoughtful men
Contrast its days of Now and Then,
And delve, and measure, and compare;

Visioning on the vacant air
Helmed legionaries, who proudly rear
The Eagle, as they pace again
The Roman Road.

But no tall brass-helmed legionnaire
Haunts it for me. Uprises there
A mother's form upon my ken,
Guiding my infant steps, as when
We walked that ancient thoroughfare,
The Roman Road.

THE VAMPIRINE FAIR

GILBERT had sailed to India's shore,
And I was all alone:
My lord came in at my open door
And said, "O fairest one!"

He leant upon the slant bureau,
And sighed, "I am sick for thee!"
"My lord," said I, "pray speak not so,
Since wedded wife I be."

Leaning upon the slant bureau,
Bitter his next words came:
"So much I know; and likewise know
My love burns on the same!

"But since you thrust my love away,
And since it knows no cure,
I must live out as best I may
The ache that I endure."

When Michaelmas browned the nether Coomb,
And Wingreen Hill above,
And made the hollyhocks rags of bloom,
My lord grew ill of love.

My lord grew ill with love for me;
Gilbert was far from port;
And—so it was—that time did see
Me housed at Manor Court.

About the bowers of Manor Court
The primrose pushed its head
When, on a day at last, report
Arrived of him I had wed.

"Gilbert, my lord, is homeward bound,
His sloop is drawing near,
What shall I do when I am found
Not in his house but here?"

"O I will heal the injuries
I've done to him and thee.
I'll give him means to live at ease
Afar from Shastonb'ry."

When Gilbert came we both took thought:
"Since comfort and good cheer,"
Said he, "So readily are bought,
He's welcome to thee, Dear."

So when my lord flung liberally
His gold in Gilbert's hands,
I coaxed and got my brothers three
Made stewards of his lands.

And then I coaxed him to install
My other kith and kin,
With aim to benefit them all
Before his love ran thin.

And next I craved to be possessed
Of plate and jewels rare.
He groaned: "You give me, Love, no rest,
Take all the law will spare!"

And so in course of years my wealth
Became a goodly hoard,
My steward brethren, too, by stealth
Had each a fortune stored.

Thereafter in the gloom he'd walk,
And by and by began
To say aloud in absent talk,
"I am a ruined man!—

"I hardly could have thought," he said,
"When first I looked on thee,
That one so soft, so rosy red,
Could thus have beggared me!"

Seeing his fair estates in pawn,
And him in such decline,
I knew that his domain had gone
To lift up me and mine.

Next month upon a Sunday morn
A gunshot sounded nigh:
By his own hand my lordly born
Had doomed himself to die.

"Live, my dear lord, and much of thine
Shall be restored to thee!"
He smiled, and said 'twixt word and sign,
"Alas—that cannot be!"

And while I searched his cabinet
For letters, keys, or will,
'Twas touching that his gaze was set
With love upon me still.

And when I burnt each document
Before his dying eyes,
'Twas sweet that he did not resent
My fear of compromise.

The steeple-cock gleamed golden when
I watched his spirit go:
And I became repentant then
That I had wrecked him so.

Three weeks at least had come and gone,
With many a saddened word,
Before I wrote to Gilbert on
The crash that had occurred.

And having worn a mournful gown,
I joined, in decent while,
My husband at a dashing town
To live in dashing style.

Yet though I now enjoy my fling,
And dine and dance and drive,
I'd give my prettiest emerald ring
To see my lord alive.

And when the meet on hunting-days
Is near his churchyard home,
I leave my bantering beaux to place
A flower upon his tomb;

And sometimes say: "Perhaps too late
The saints in Heaven deplore
That tender time when, moved by Fate,
He darked my cottage door."

THE REMINDER

WHILE I watch the Christmas blaze
Paint the room with ruddy rays,
Something makes my vision glide
To the frosty scene outside.

There, to reach a rotting berry,
Toils a thrush,—constrained to very
Dregs of food by sharp distress,
Taking such with thankfulness.

Why, O starving bird, when I
One day's joy would justify,
And put misery out of view,
Do you make me notice you!

THE RAMBLER

I DO not see the hills around,
Nor mark the tints the copses wear ;
I do not note the grassy ground
And constellated daisies there.

I hear not the contralto note
Of cuckoos hid on either hand,
The whirr that shakes the nighthawk's throat
When eve's brown awning hoods the land.

Some say each songster, tree, and mead—
All eloquent of love divine—
Receives their constant careful heed :
Such keen appraisement is not mine.

The tones around me that I hear,
The aspects, meanings, shapes I see,
Are those removed ones missed when near,
And now perceived too late by me.

NIGHT IN THE OLD HOME

WHEN the wasting embers redden the chimney-breast,
And Life's bare pathway looms like a desert track to me,
And from hall and parlour the living have gone to their rest,
My perished people who housed them here come back to me.

They come and seat them around in their mouldy places,
Now and then bending towards me a glance of wistfulness,
A strange upbraiding smile upon all their faces,
And in the bearing of each a passive tristfulness.

"Do you uphold me, lingering and languishing here,
A pale late plant of your once strong stock?" I say to them;
"A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere,
And on That which consigns men to night after showing the day to them?"

"—O let be the Wherefore! We fevered our years not thus:
Take of Life what it grants, without question!" they answer me seemingly.
"Enjoy, suffer, wait: spread the table here freely like us,
And, satisfied, placid, unfretting, watch Time away beamingly!"

AFTER THE LAST BREATH

(J. H 1813–1904)

THERE'S no more to be done, or feared, or hoped;
None now need watch, speak low, and list, and tire;
No irksome crease outsmoothed, no pillow sloped
Does she require.

Blankly we gaze. We are free to go or stay;
Our morrow's anxious plans have missed their aim;
Whether we leave to-night or wait till day
Counts as the same.

The lettered vessels of medicaments
Seem asking wherefore we have set them here;
Each palliative its silly face presents
As useless gear.

And yet we feel that something savours well;
We note a numb relief withheld before;
Our well-beloved is prisoner in the cell
Of Time no more.

We see by littles now the deft achievement
Whereby she has escaped the Wrongers all,
In view of which our momentary bereavement
Outshapes but small.

1904.

IN CHILDBED

In the middle of the night
Mother's spirit came and spoke to me,
Looking weariful and white—
As 'twere untimely news she broke to me.

"O my daughter, joyed are you
To own the weetless child you mother there;
'Men may search the wide world through,'
You think, 'nor find so fair another there!'

"Dear, this midnight time unwombs
Thousands just as rare and beautiful;
Thousands whom High Heaven foredooms
To be as bright, as good, as dutiful.

"Source of ecstatic hopes and fears
And innocent maternal vanity,
Your fond exploit but shapes for tears
New thoroughfares in sad humanity.

"Yet as you dream, so dreamt I
When Life stretched forth its morning ray to me;
Other views for by and by!" . . . .
Such strange things did mother say to me.

THE PINE PLANTERS

(Marty South's Reverie)

I

We work here together
In blast and breeze;
He fills the earth in,
I hold the trees.

He does not notice
That what I do
Keeps me from moving
And chills me through.

He has seen one fairer
I feel by his eye,
Which skims me as though
I were not by.

And since she passed here
He scarce has known
But that the woodland
Holds him alone.

I have worked here with him
Since morning shine,
He busy with his thoughts
And I with mine.

I have helped him so many,
So many days,
But never win any
Small word of praise!

Shall I not sigh to him
That I work on
Glad to be nigh to him
Though hope is gone?

Nay, though he never
Knew love like mine,
I'll bear it ever
And make no sign!

II

From the bundle at hand here
I take each tree,
And set it to stand, here
Always to be;
When, in a second,
As if from fear
Of Life unreckoned
Beginning here,
It starts a sighing
Through day and night,
Though while down lying
'Twas voiceless quite.

It will sigh in the morning,
Will sigh at noon,
At the winter's warning,
In wafts of June;
Grieving that never
Kind Fate decreed
It should for ever
Remain a seed,

And shun the welter
    Of things without,
Unneeding shelter
    From storm and drought.

Thus, all unknowing
    For whom or what
We set it growing
    In this bleak spot,
It still will grieve here
    Throughout its time,
Unable to leave here,
    Or change its clime;
Or tell the story
    Of us to-day
When, halt and hoary,
    We pass away.

THE DEAR

I PLODDED to Fairmile Hill-top, where
A maiden one fain would guard
From every hazard and every care
Advanced on the roadside sward.

I wondered how succeeding suns
Would shape her wayfarings,
And wished some Power might take such ones
Under Its warding wings.

The busy breeze came up the hill
And smartened her cheek to red,
And frizzled her hair to a haze. With a will
"Good-morning, my Dear!" I said.

She glanced from me to the far-off gray,
And, with proud severity,
"Good-morning to you—though I may say
I am not *your* Dear," quoth she:

"For I am the Dear of one not here—
One far from his native land!"—
And she passed me by; and I did not try
To make her understand.

1901.

ONE WE KNEW

(M. H. 1772–1857)

She told how they used to form for the country dances—
"The Triumph," "The New-rigged Ship"—
To the light of the guttering wax in the panelled manses,
And in cots to the blink of a dip.

She spoke of the wild "poussetting" and "allemanding"
On carpet, on oak, and on sod;
And the two long rows of ladies and gentlemen standing,
And the figures the couples trod.

She showed us the spot where the maypole was yearly planted,
And where the bandsmen stood
While breeched and kerchiefed partners whirled, and panted
To choose each other for good.

She told of that far-back day when they learnt astounded
Of the death of the King of France:
Of the Terror; and then of Bonaparte's unbounded
Ambition and arrogance.

Of how his threats woke warlike preparations
Along the southern strand,
And how each night brought tremors and trepidations
Lest morning should see him land.

ONE WE KNEW

She said she had often heard the gibbet creaking
As it swayed in the lightning flash,
Had caught from the neighbouring town a small child's
shrieking
At the cart-tail under the lash. . . .

With cap-framed face and long gaze into the embers—
We seated around her knees—
She would dwell on such dead themes, not as one who
remembers,
But rather as one who sees.

She seemed one left behind of a band gone distant
So far that no tongue could hail:
Past things retold were to her as things existent,
Things present but as a tale.

May 20, 1902.

A WET NIGHT

I PACE along, the rain-shafts riddling me,
Mile after mile out by the moorland way,
And up the hill, and through the ewe-leaze gray
Into the lane, and round the corner tree;

Where, as my clothing clams me, mire-bestarred,
And the enfeebled light dies out of day,
Leaving the liquid shades to reign, I say,
"This is a hardship to be calendared!"

Yet sires of mine now perished and forgot,
When worse beset, ere roads were shapen here,
And night and storm were foes indeed to fear,
Times numberless have trudged across this spot
In sturdy muteness on their strenuous lot,
And taking all such toils as trifles mere.

BEFORE LIFE AND AFTER

A TIME there was—as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell—
Before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well.

None suffered sickness, love, or loss,
None knew regret, starved hope, or heart-burnings;
None cared whatever crash or cross
Brought wrack to things.

If something ceased, no tongue bewailed,
If something winced and waned, no heart was wrung;
If brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed,
No sense was stung.

But the disease of feeling germed,
And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong;
Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed
How long, how long?

NEW YEAR'S EVE

"I HAVE finished another year," said God,
"In grey, green, white, and brown;
I have strewn the leaf upon the sod,
Sealed up the worm within the clod,
And let the last sun down."

"And what's the good of it?" I said.
"What reasons made you call
From formless void this earth we tread,
When nine-and-ninety can be read
Why nought should be at all?

"Yea, Sire; why shaped you us, who 'in
This tabernacle groan'—
If ever a joy be found herein,
Such joy no man had wished to win
If he had never known!"

Then he: "My labours—logicless—
You may explain; not I:
Sense-sealed I have wrought, without a guess
That I evolved a Consciousness
To ask for reasons why.

"Strange that ephemeral creatures who
By my own ordering are,
Should see the shortness of my view,
Use ethic tests I never knew,
Or made provision for!"

NEW YEAR'S EVE

He sank to raptness as of yore,
    And opening New Year's Day
Wove it by rote as theretofore,
And went on working evermore
    In his unweeting way.

1906.

GOD'S EDUCATION

I saw him steal the light away
That haunted in her eye:
It went so gently none could say
More than that it was there one day
And missing by-and-by.

I watched her longer, and he stole
Her lily tincts and rose;
All her young sprightliness of soul
Next fell beneath his cold control,
And disappeared like those.

I asked: "Why do you serve her so?
Do you, for some glad day,
Hoard these her sweets—?" He said, "O no,
They charm not me; I bid Time throw
Them carelessly away."

Said I: "We call that cruelty—
We, your poor mortal kind."
He mused. "The thought is new to me.
Forsooth, though I men's master be
Theirs is the teaching mind!"

TO SINCERITY

O SWEET sincerity!—
Where modern methods be
What scope for thine and thee?

Life may be sad past saying,
Its greens for ever graying,
Its faiths to dust decaying;

And youth may have foreknown it,
And riper seasons shown it,
But custom cries: "Disown it:

"Say ye rejoice, though grieving,
Believe, while unbelieving,
Behold, without perceiving!"

—Yet, would men look at true things,
And unilluded view things,
And count to bear undue things,

The real might mend the seeming,
Facts better their foredeeming,
And Life its disesteeming.

February 1899.

PANTHERA

(For other forms of this legend—first met with in the second century—see Origen contra Celsum ; the Talmud ; Sepher Toldoth Jeschu ; quoted fragments of lost Apocryphal gospels ; Strauss ; Haeckel ; etc.)

YEA, as I sit here, crutched, and cricked, and bent,
I think of Panthera, who underwent
Much from insidious aches in his decline ;
But his aches were not radical like mine ;
They were the twinges of old wounds—the feel
Of the hand he had lost, shorn by barbarian steel,
Which came back, so he said, at a change in the air
Fingers and all, as if it still were there.
My pains are otherwise : upclosing cramps
And stiffened tendons from this country's damps,
Where Panthera was never commandant.—
The Fates sent him by way of the Levant.

He had been blithe in his young manhood's time,
And as centurion carried well his prime.
In Ethiop, Araby, climes fair and fell,
He had seen service and had borne him well.
Nought shook him then : he was serene as brave ;
Yet later knew some shocks, and would grow grave
When pondering them ; shocks less of corporal kind
Than phantom-like, that disarranged his mind ;
And it was in the way of warning me
(By much his junior) against levity
That he recounted them ; and one in chief
Panthera loved to set in bold relief.

This was a tragedy of his Eastern days,
Personal in touch—though I have sometimes thought
That touch a possible delusion—wrought
Of half-conviction carried to a craze—
His mind at last being stressed by ails and age :—
Yet his good faith thereon I well could wage.

I had said it long had been a wish with me
That I might leave a scion—some small tree
As channel for my sap, if not my name—
Ay, offspring even of no legitimate claim,
In whose advance I secretly could joy.
Thereat he warmed.
" Cancel such wishes, boy!
A son may be a comfort or a curse,
A seer, a doer, a coward, a fool; yea, worse—
A criminal. . . . *That* I could testify!" . . .
" Panthera has no guilty son!" cried I
All unbelieving. " Friend, you do not know,"
He darkly dropt: " True, I've none now to show,
For *the law took him.* Ay, in sooth, Jove shaped it so!"

" This noon is not unlike," he again began,
" The noon these pricking memories print on me—
Yea, that day when the sun grew copper-red,
And I served in Judæa . . . 'Twas a date
Of rest for arms. The *Pax Romana* ruled,
To the chagrin of frontier legionaries!
Palestine was annexed—though sullen yet,—
I, being in age some two-score years and ten,
And having the garrison in Jerusalem
Part in my hands as acting officer
Under the Governor. A tedious time
I found it, of routine, amid a folk
Restless, contentless, and irascible.—
Quelling some riot, sentrying court and hall,
Sending men forth on public meeting-days
To maintain order, were my duties there.

"Then came a morn in spring, and the cheerful sun
Whitened the city and the hills around,
And every mountain-road that clambered them,
Tincturing the greyness of the olives warm,
And the rank cacti round the valley's sides.
The day was one whereon death-penalties
Were put in force, and here and there were set
The soldiery for order, as I said,
Since one of the condemned had raised some heat,
And crowds surged passionately to see him slain.
I, mounted on a Cappadocian horse,
With some half-company of auxiliaries,
Had captained the procession through the streets
When it came streaming from the judgment-hall
After the verdicts of the Governor.
It drew to the great gate of the northern way
That bears towards Damascus; and to a knoll
Upon the common, just beyond the walls—
Whence could be swept a wide horizon round
Over the housetops to the remotest heights.
Here was the public execution-ground
For city crimes, called then and doubtless now
Golgotha, Cranion, or Calvaria.

"The usual dooms were duly meted out;
Some three or four were stript, transfixed, and nailed,
And no great stir occurred. A day of wont
It was to me, so far, and would have slid
Clean from my memory at its squalid close
But for an incident that followed these.

"Among the tag-rag rabble of either sex
That hung around the wretches as they writhed,
Till thrust back by our spears, one held my eye—
A weeping woman, whose strained countenance,
Sharpened against a looming livid cloud,
Was mocked by the crude rays of afternoon—
The mother of one of those who suffered there
I had heard her called when spoken roughly to

By my ranged men for pressing forward so.
It stole upon me hers was a face I knew;
Yet when, or how, I had known it, for a while
Eluded me. And then at once it came.

"Some thirty years or more before that noon
I was sub-captain of a company
Drawn from the legion of Calabria,
That marched up from Judæa north to Tyre.
We had pierced the old flat country of Jezreel,
The great Esdraelon Plain and fighting-floor
Of Jew with Canaanite, and with the host
Of Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, met
While crossing there to strike the Assyrian pride.
We left behind Gilboa; passed by Nain;
Till bulging Tabor rose, embossed to the top
With arbute, terabinth, and locust growths.

"Encumbering me were sundry sick, so fallen
Through drinking from a swamp beside the way;
But we pressed on, till, bearing over a ridge,
We dipt into a world of pleasantness—
A vale, the fairest I had gazed upon—
Which lapped a village on its furthest slopes
Called Nazareth, brimmed round by uplands nigh.
In the midst thereof a fountain bubbled, where,
Lime-dry from marching, our glad halt we made
To rest our sick ones, and refresh us all.

"Here a day onward, towards the eventide,
Our men were piping to a Pyrrhic dance
Trod by their comrades, when the young women came
To fill their pitchers, as their custom was.
I proffered help to one—a slim girl, coy
Even as a fawn, meek, and as innocent.
Her long blue gown, the string of silver coins
That hung down by her banded beautiful hair,
Symboled in full immaculate modesty.

"Well, I was young, and hot, and readily stirred
To quick desire. 'Twas tedious timing out
The convalescence of the soldiery;
And I beguiled the long and empty days
By blissful yieldance to her sweet allure,
Who had no arts, but what out-arted all,
The tremulous tender charm of trustfulness.
We met, and met, and under the winking stars
That passed which peoples earth—true union, yea,
To the pure eye of her simplicity.

"Meanwhile the sick found health; and we pricked on.
I made her no rash promise of return,
As some do use; I was sincere in that;
I said we sundered never to meet again—
And yet I spoke untruth unknowingly!—
For meet again we did. Now, guess you aught?
The weeping mother on Calvaria
Was she I had known—albeit that time and tears
Had wasted rudely her once flowerlike form,
And her soft eyes, now swollen with sorrowing.

"Though I betrayed some qualms, she marked me not;
And I was scarce of mood to comrade her
And close the silence of so wide a time
To claim a malefactor as my son—
(For so I guessed him). And inquiry made
Brought rumour how at Nazareth long before
An old man wedded her for pity's sake
On finding she had grown pregnant, none knew how,
Cared for her child, and loved her till he died.

"Well; there it ended; save that then I learnt
That he—the man whose ardent blood was mine—
Had waked sedition long among the Jews,
And hurled insulting parlance at their god,
Whose temple bulked upon the adjoining hill,

Vowing that he would raze it, that himself
Was god as great as he whom they adored,
And by descent, moreover, was their king;
With sundry other incitements to misrule.

"The impalements done, and done the soldiers' game
Of raffling for the clothes, a legionary,
Longinus, pierced the young man with his lance
At signs from me, moved by his agonies
Through naysaying the drug they had offered him.
It brought the end. And when he had breathed his last
The woman went. I saw her never again . . . .
Now glares my moody meaning on you, friend?—
That when you talk of offspring as sheer joy
So trustingly, you blink contingencies.
Fors Fortuna! He who goes fathering
Gives frightful hostages to hazardry!"

Thus Panthera's tale. 'Twas one he seldom told,
But yet it got abroad. He would unfold,
At other times, a story of less gloom,
Though his was not a heart where jests had room.
He would regret discovery of the truth
Was made too late to influence to ruth
The Procurator who had condemned his son—
Or rather him so deemed. For there was none
To prove that Panthera erred not: and indeed,
When vagueness of identity I would plead,
Panther himself would sometimes own as much—
Yet lothly. But, assuming fact was such,
That the said woman did not recognize
Her lover's face, is matter for surprise.
However, there's his tale, fantasy or otherwise.

Thereafter shone not men of Panthera's kind:
The indolent heads at home were ill-inclined
To press campaigning that would hoist the star

Of their lieutenants valorous afar.
Jealousies kept him irked abroad, controlled
And stinted by an Empire no more bold.
Yet in some actions southward he had share—
In Mauretania and Numidia; there
With eagle eye, and sword and steed and spur,
Quelling uprisings promptly. Some small stir
In Parthia next engaged him, until maimed,
As I have said; and cynic Time proclaimed
His noble spirit broken. What a waste
Of such a Roman!—one in youth-time graced
With indescribable charm, so I have heard,
Yea, magnetism impossible to word
When faltering as I saw him. What a fame,
O Son of Saturn, had adorned his name,
Might the Three so have urged Thee!—Hour by hour
His own disorders hampered Panthera's power
To brood upon the fate of those he had known,
Even of that one he always called his own—
Either in morbid dream or memory . . . .
He died at no great age, untroublously,
An exit rare for ardent soldiers such as he.

THE UNBORN

I ROSE at night, and visited
The Cave of the Unborn:
And crowding shapes surrounded me
For tidings of the life to be,
Who long had prayed the silent Head
To haste its advent morn.

Their eyes were lit with artless trust,
Hope thrilled their every tone;
"A scene the loveliest, is it not?
A pure delight, a beauty-spot
Where all is gentle, true and just,
And darkness is unknown?"

My heart was anguished for their sake,
I could not frame a word;
And they descried my sunken face,
And seemed to read therein, and trace
The news that pity would not break,
Nor truth leave unaverred.

And as I silently retired
I turned and watched them still,
And they came helter-skelter out,
Driven forward like a rabble rout
Into the world they had so desired
By the all-immanent Will.

THE MAN HE KILLED

"Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

"But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

"I shot him dead because—
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

"He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like—just as I—
Was out of work—had sold his traps—
No other reason why.

"Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown."

1902.

GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

(A Memory of Christiana C——)

Where Blackmoor was, the road that led
To Bath, she could not show,
Nor point the sky that overspread
Towns ten miles off or so.

But that Calcutta stood this way,
Cape Horn there figured fell,
That here was Boston, here Bombay,
She could declare full well.

Less known to her the track athwart
Froom Mead or Yell'ham Wood
Than how to make some Austral port
In seas of surly mood.

She saw the glint of Guinea's shore
Behind the plum-tree nigh,
Heard old unruly Biscay's roar
In the weir's purl hard by. . . .

"My son's a sailor, and he knows
All seas and many lands,
And when he's home he points and shows
Each country where it stands.

"He's now just there—by Gib's high rock—
And when he gets, you see,
To Portsmouth here, behind the clock,
Then he'll come back to me!"

THE REJECTED MEMBER'S WIFE

We shall see her no more
On the balcony,
Smiling, while hurt, at the roar
As of surging sea
From the stormy sturdy band
Who have doomed her lord's cause,
Though she waves her little hand
As it were applause.

Here will be candidates yet,
And candidates' wives,
Fervid with zeal to set
Their ideals on our lives:
Here will come market-men
On the market-days,
Here will clash now and then
More such party assays.

And the balcony will fill
When such times are renewed,
And the throng in the street will thrill
With to-day's mettled mood;
But she will no more stand
In the sunshine there,
With that wave of her white-gloved hand,
And that chestnut hair.

January 1906.

ONE RALPH BLOSSOM SOLILOQUIZES

("It being deposed that vij women who were mayds before he knew them have been brought upon the towne [rates ?] by the fornicacions of one Ralph Blossom, Mr. Maior inquired why he should not contribute xiv pence weekly toward their mayntenance. But it being shewn that the sayd R. B. was dying of a purple feaver, no order was made."—*Budmouth Borough Minutes:* 16—.)

When I am in hell or some such place,
A-groaning over my sorry case,
What will those seven women say to me
Who, when I coaxed them, answered "Aye" to me?

"I did not understand your sign!"
Will be the words of Caroline;
While Jane will cry, "If I'd had proof of you,
I should have learnt to hold aloof of you!"

"I won't reproach: it was to be!"
Will drily murmur Cicely;
And Rosa: "I feel no hostility,
For I must own I lent facility."

Lizzy says: "Sharp was my regret,
And sometimes it is now! But yet
I joy that, though it brought notoriousness,
I knew Love once and all its gloriousness!"

Says Patience: "Why are we apart?
Small harm did you, my poor Sweet Heart
A manchild born, now tall and beautiful,
Was worth the ache of days undutiful.

And Anne cries: "O the time was fair,
So wherefore should you burn down there?
—There is a deed under the sun, my Love,
And that was ours. What's done is done, my Love.
These trumpets here in Heaven are dumb to me
With you away. Dear, come, O come to me!"

THE NOBLE LADY'S TALE

(*Circa* 1790)

I

"We moved with pensive paces,
I and he,
And bent our faded faces
Wistfully,
For something troubled him, and troubled me.

"The lanthorn feebly lightened
Our grey hall,
Where ancient brands had brightened
Hearth and wall,
And shapes long vanished whither vanish all.

"'O why, Love, nightly, daily,'
I had said,
'Dost sigh, and smile so palely,
As if shed
Were all Life's blossoms, all its dear things dead?'

"'Since silence sets thee grieving,'
He replied,
'And I abhor deceiving
One so tried,
Why, Love, I'll speak, ere time us twain divide.

"He held me, I remember,
Just as when

Our life was June—(September
It was then);
And we walked on, until he spoke again:

"'Susie, an Irish mummer,
Loud-acclaimed
Through the gay London summer,
Was I; named
A master in my art, who would be famed.

"'But lo, there beamed before me
Lady Su;
God's altar-vow she swore me
When none knew,
And for her sake I bade the sock adieu.

"'My Lord your father's pardon
Thus I won;
He let his heart unharden
Towards his son,
And honourably condoned what we had done;

"'But said—recall you, dearest?—
As for Su,
I'd see her—ay, though nearest
Me unto—
Sooner entombed than in a stage purlieu!

"'Just so.—And here he housed us,
In this nook,
Where Love like balm has drowsed us:
Robin, rook,
Our chief familiars, next to string and book.

"'Our days here, peace-enshrouded,
Followed strange
The old stage-joyance, crowded,
Rich in range;
But never did my soul desire a change,

"'Till now, when far uncertain
Lips of yore
Call, call me to the curtain,
There once more,
But *once*, to tread the boards I trod before.

"'A night—the last and single
Ere I die—
To face the lights, to mingle
As did I
Once in the game, and rivet every eye!'

"Such was his wish. He feared it,
Feared it though
Rare memories so endeared it.
I, also,
Feared it still more; its outcome who could know?

"'Alas, my Love,' said I then,
'Since it be
A wish so mastering, why, then,
E'en go ye!—
Despite your pledge to father and to me . . .'

"'Twas fixed; no more was spoken
Thereupon;
Our silences were broken
Only on
The petty items of his needs while gone.

"Farewell he bade me, pleading
That it meant
So little, thus conceding
To his bent;
And then, as one constrained to go, he went.

"Thwart thoughts I let deride me,
As, 'twere vain

To hope him back beside me
Ever again:
Could one plunge make a waxing passion wane?

"I thought, 'Some wild stage-woman,
Honour-wrecked . . .'
But no: it was inhuman
To suspect;
Though little cheer could my lone heart affect!

II

"Yet came it, to my gladness,
That, as vowed,
He did return.—But sadness
Swiftly cowed
The joy with which my greeting was endowed.

"Some woe was there. Estrangement
Marked his mind.
Each welcome-warm arrangement
I had designed
Touched him no more than deeds of careless kind.

"'I—*failed*!' escaped him glumly.
'—I went on
In my old part. But dumbly—
Memory gone—
Advancing, I sank sick; my vision drawn

"'To something drear, distressing
As the knell
Of all hopes worth possessing!' . . .
—What befell
Seemed linked with me, but how I could not tell.

"Hours passed; till I implored him,
As he knew

How faith and frankness toward him
Ruled me through,
To say what ill I had done, and could undo.

"'*Faith—frankness.* Ah! Heaven save such!'
Murmured he,
'They are wedded wealth! *I* gave such
Liberally,
But you, Dear, not. For you suspected me.'

"I was about beseeching
In hurt haste
More meaning, when he, reaching
To my waist,
Led me to pace the hall as once we paced.

"'I never meant to draw you
To own all,'
Declared he. 'But—I *saw* you—
By the wall,
Half-hid. And that was why I failed withal!'

"'Where? when?' said I—'Why, nigh me,
At the play
That night. That you should spy me,
Doubt my fay,
And follow, furtive, took my heart away!'

"That I had never been there,
But had gone
To my locked room—unseen there,
Curtains drawn,
Long days abiding—told I, wonder-wan.

"'Nay, 'twas your form and vesture,
Cloak and gown,
Your hooded features—gesture
Half in frown,
That faced me, pale,' he urged, 'that night in town.

"'And when, outside, I handed
To her chair
(As courtesy demanded
Of me there)
The leading lady, you peeped from the stair.

"Straight pleaded I: 'Forsooth, Love,
Had I gone,
I must have been in truth, Love,
Mad to don
Such well-known raiment.' But he still went on

"That he was not mistaken
Nor misled.—
I felt like one forsaken,
Wished me dead,
That he could think thus of the wife he had wed!

"His going seemed to waste him
Like a curse,
To wreck what once had graced him;
And, averse
To my approach, he mused and moped, and worse.

"Till, what no words effected
Thought achieved:
It was my wraith—projected,
He conceived,
Thither, by my tense brain at home aggrieved.

"Thereon his credence centred
Till he died;
And, no more tempted, entered—
Sanctified—
The little vault with room for one beside."

III

Thus far the lady's story.—
Now she, too,
Reclines within that hoary
Last dark mew
In Mellstock Quire with him she loved so true.

A yellowing marble, placed there
Tablet-wise,
And two joined hearts enchased there
Meet the eyes;
And reading their twin names we moralize:

Did she, we wonder, follow
Jealously?
And were those protests hollow?—
Or saw he
Some semblant dame? Or can wraiths really be?

Were it she went, her honour,
All may hold,
Pressed truth at last upon her
Till she told—
(Him only—others as these lines unfold.)

Riddle death-sealed for ever,
Let it rest!
One's heart could blame her never
If one guessed
That go she did. She knew her actor best.

UNREALIZED

Down comes the winter rain—
Spoils my hat and bow—
Runs into the poll of me;
But mother won't know.

We've been out and caught a cold,
Knee-deep in snow;
Such a lucky thing it is
That mother won't know!

Rosy lost herself last night—
Couldn't tell where to go.
Yes—it rather frightened her,
But mother didn't know.

Somebody made Willy drunk
At the Christmas show:
O 'twas fun! It's well for him
That mother won't know!

Howsoever wild we are,
Late at school or slow,
Mother won't be cross with us,
Mother won't know.

How we cried the day she died,
Neighbours whispering low! . . .
But we now do what we will—
Mother won't know.

WAGTAIL AND BABY

A BABY watched a ford, whereto
A wagtail came for drinking ;
A blaring bull went wading through ;
The wagtail showed no shrinking.

A stallion splashed his way across,
The birdie nearly sinking ;
He gave his plumes a twitch and toss,
And held his own unblinking.

Next saw the baby round the spot
A mongrel slowly slinking ;
The wagtail gazed, but faltered not
In dip and sip and prinking.

A perfect gentleman then neared ;
The wagtail, in a winking,
With terror rose and disappeared ;
The baby fell a-thinking.

ABERDEEN

(April: 1905)

"And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times."
—Isaiah xxxiii. 6.

I LOOKED and thought, "All is too gray and cold
To wake my place-enthusiasms of old!"
Till a voice passed: "Behind that granite mien
Lurks the imposing beauty of a Queen."
I looked anew; and saw the radiant form
Of Her who soothes in stress, who steers in storm,
On the grave influence of whose eyes sublime
Men count for the stability of the time.

GEORGE MEREDITH

1828-1909

Forty years back, when much had place
That since has perished out of mind,
I heard that voice and saw that face.

He spoke as one afoot will wind
A morning horn ere men awake;
His note was trenchant, turning kind.

He was of those whose wit can shake
And riddle to the very core
The counterfeits that Time will break. . . .

Of late, when we two met once more,
The luminous countenance and rare
Shone just as forty years before.

So that, when now all tongues declare
His shape unseen by his green hill,
I scarce believe he sits not there.

No matter. Further and further still
Through the world's vaporous vitiate air
His words wing on—as live words will.

May 1909.

YELL'HAM-WOOD'S STORY

Coomb-Firtrees say that Life is a moan,
And Clyffe-hill Clump says "Yea!"
But Yell'ham says a thing of its own:
It's not "Gray, gray
Is Life alway!"
That Yell'ham says,
Nor that Life is for ends unknown.

It says that Life would signify
A thwarted purposing:
That we come to live, and are called to die.
Yes, that's the thing
In fall, in spring,
That Yell'ham says:—
"Life offers—to deny!"

1902.

A YOUNG MAN'S EPIGRAM ON EXISTENCE

A SENSELESS school, where we must give
Our lives that we may learn to live!
A dolt is he who memorizes
Lessons that leave no time for prizes.

16 W. P. V., 1866.

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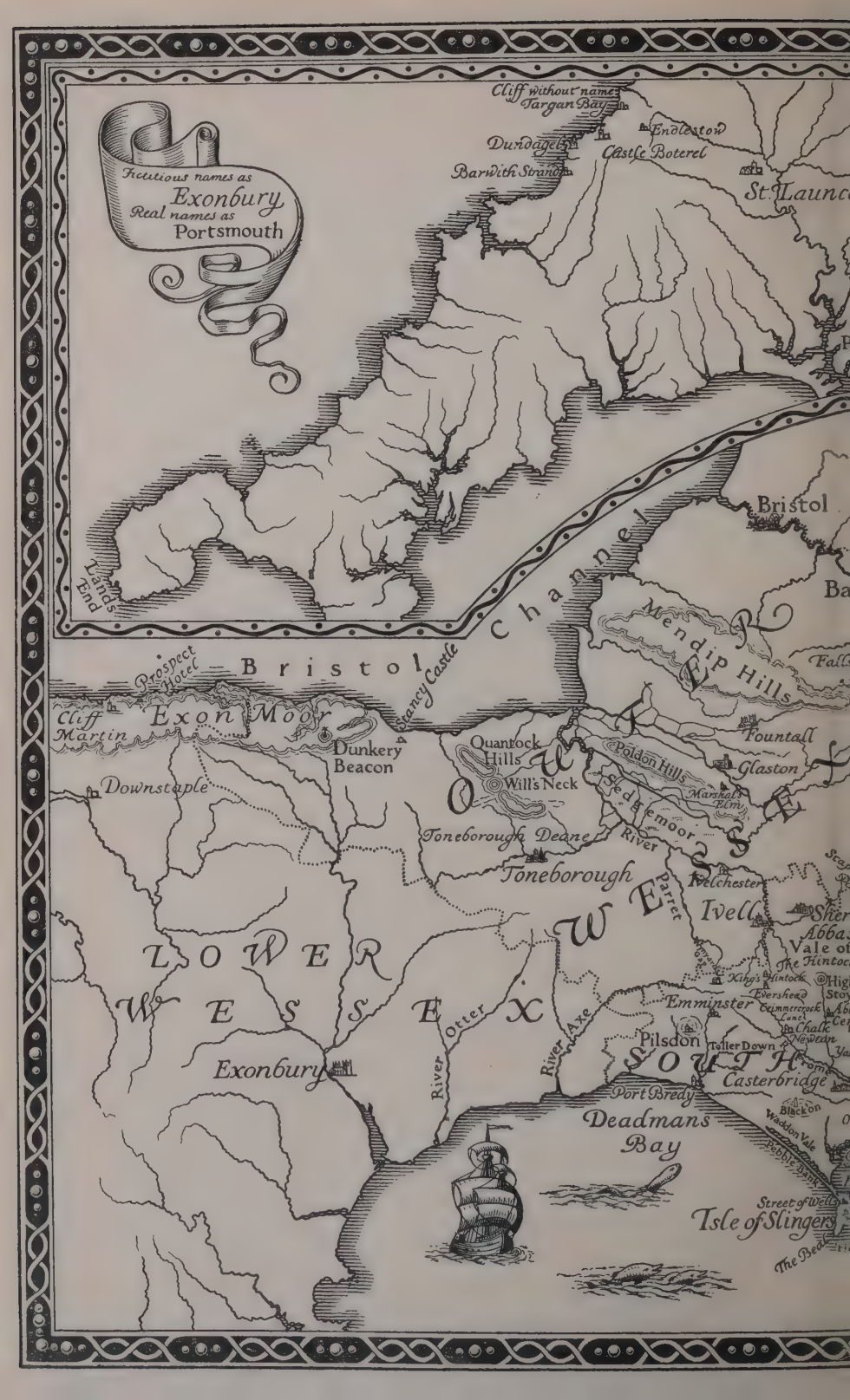

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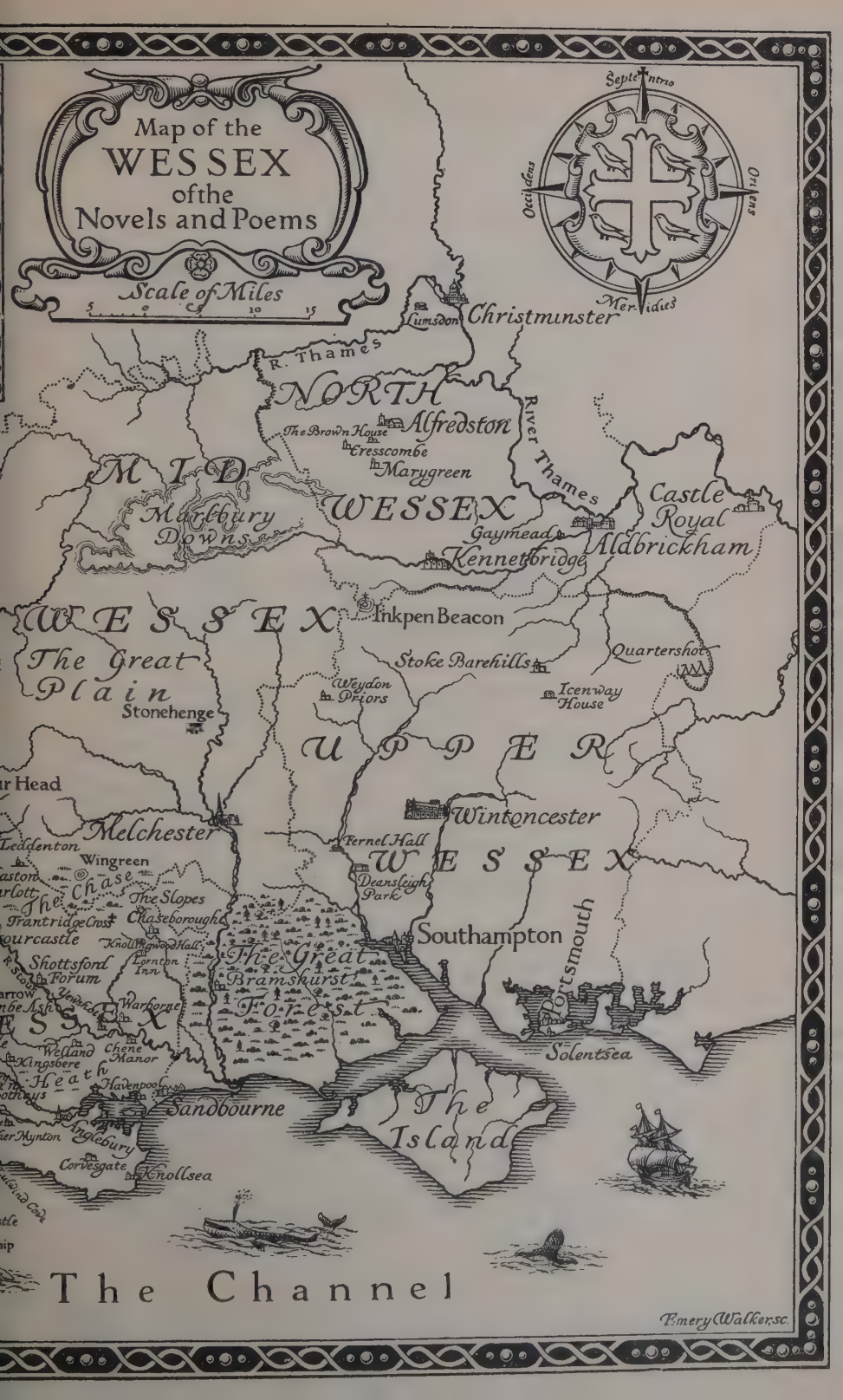
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